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The Comics Opinion and Comics Review

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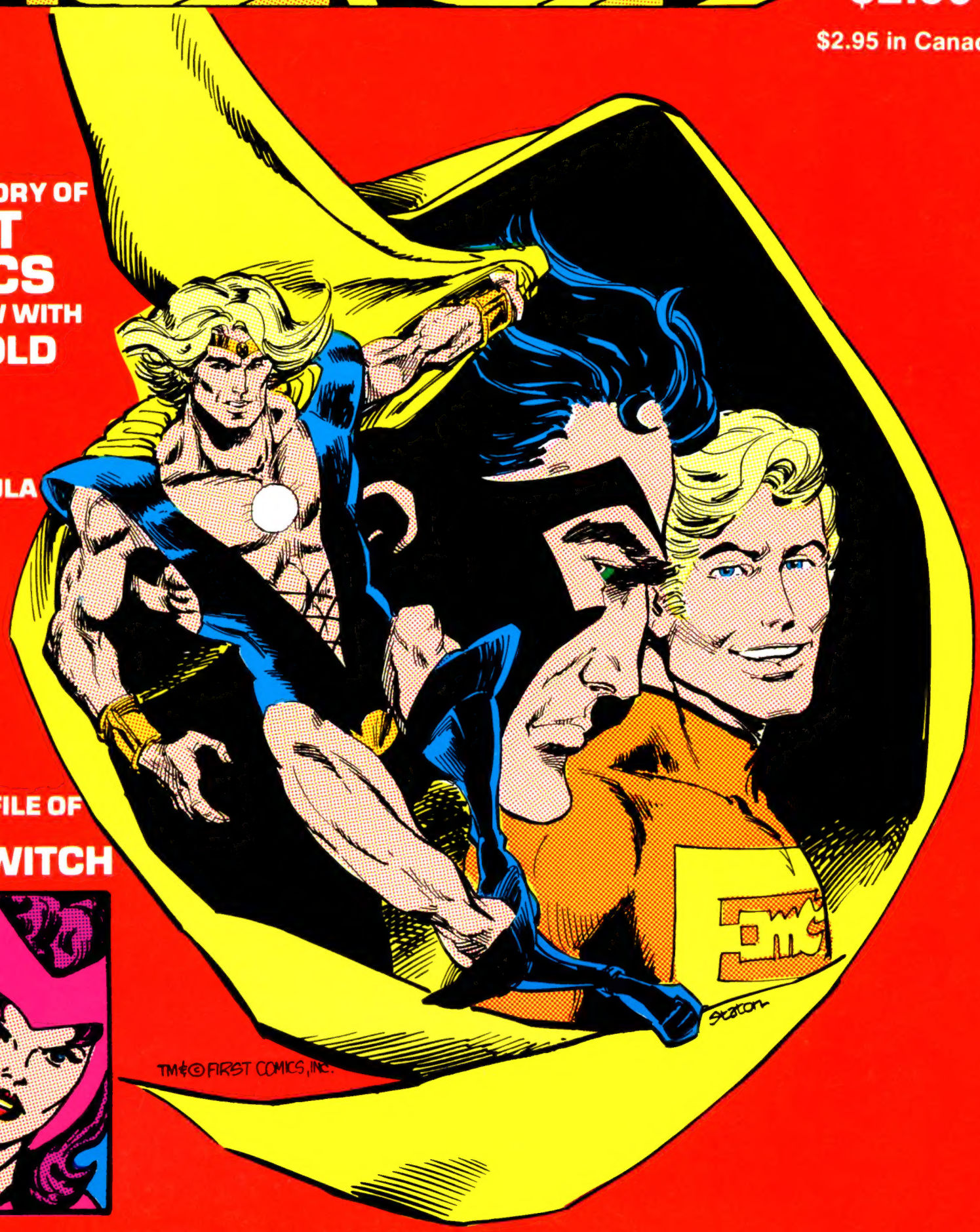
THE INSIDE STORY OF
FIRST COMICS
AN INTERVIEW WITH
MIKE GOLD

ENGLEHART'S JLA

IN-DEPTH PROFILE OF
THE
SCARLET WITCH



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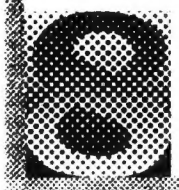

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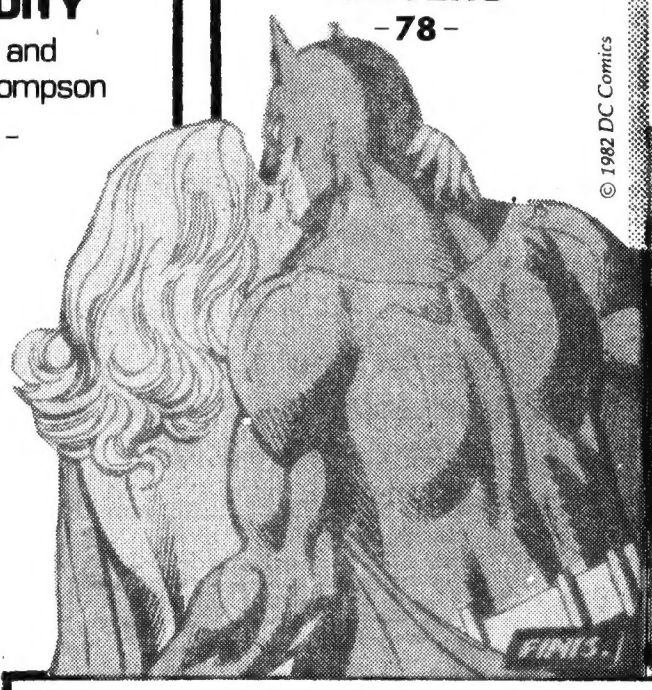

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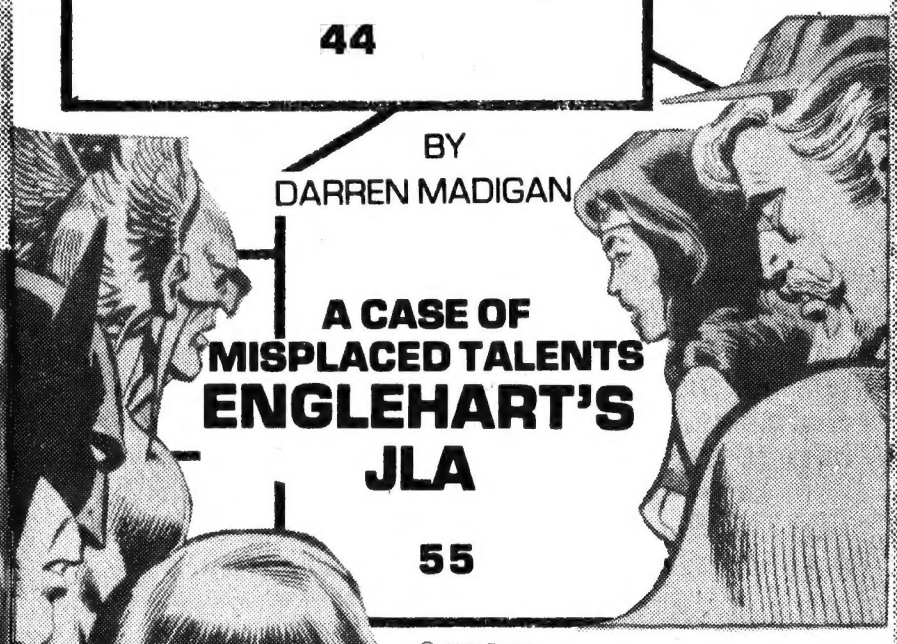

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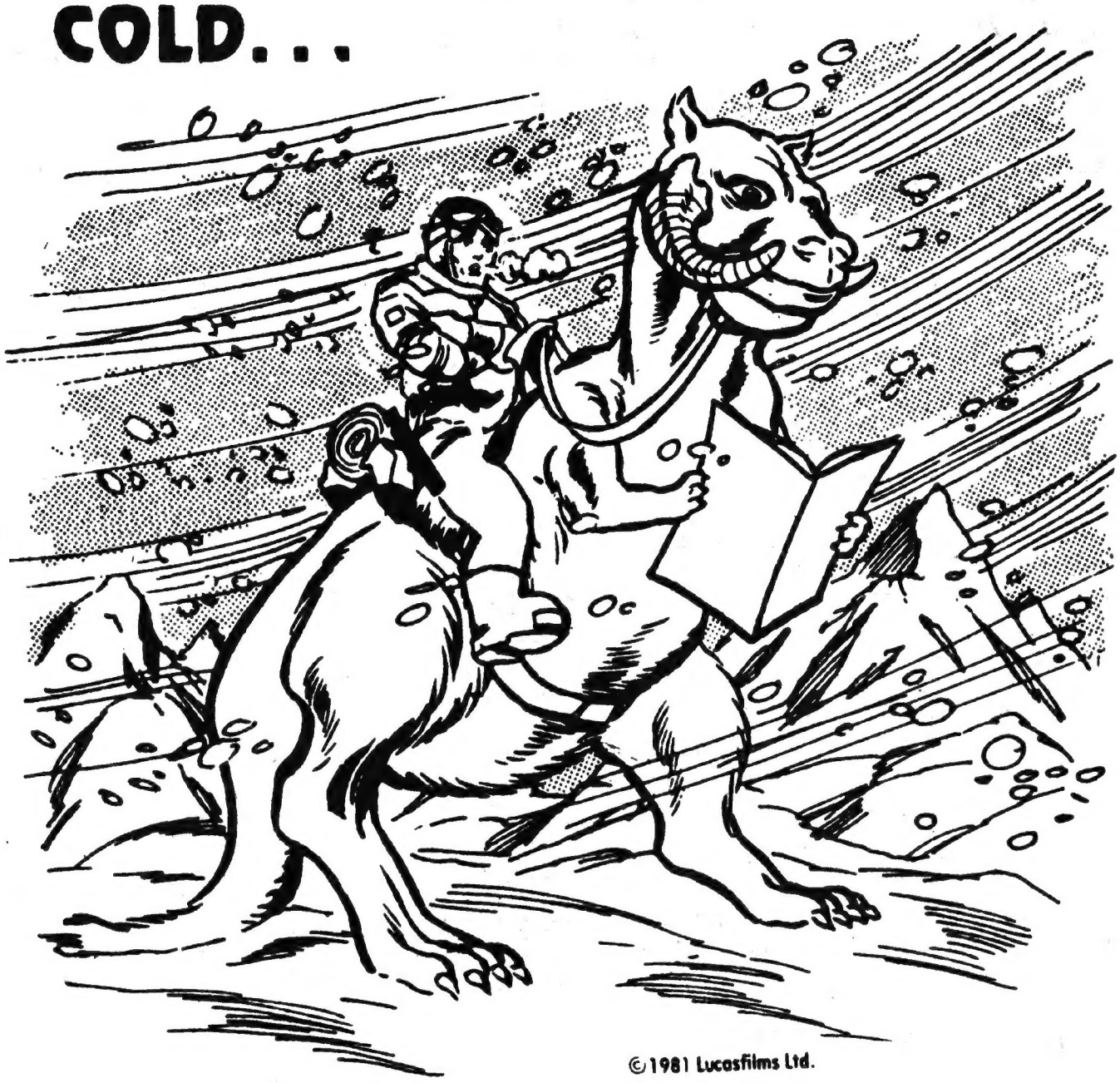

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EDITORIAL

This is the third issue of LOC that I have been directly involved with. This is also the third issue since **NMP** replotted the direction and changed the character of the magazine. Yes, a magazine does have a character and therein was the problem with **LOC.** It had drifted to a point where it was too much like Comics Feature, yet not enough like Feature (even if we wanted it to be, which we do not) to be a viable magazine and stand on its own. Well, that has all changed. LOC now has its own direction, its own design- its own character- and it is getting stronger with every issue. And, the response to it is both heartwarming and exciting. With LOC and Comics Feature we have two of the best magazines on the market dealing with the subject we all love- comics. And a lot of you must think so too, because the responses we have been getting from our distributors and dealers alike indicate that more of you are picking up these magazines with each passing issue. And you haven't seen **THE GOLDEN AGE OF COMICS,NMP'S** newest magazine title, edited by Don Thompson, yet. Just wait until September!

This issue of LOC is also (in a manner of speaking) the last. Next month **LOC** becomes **COMIC FANDOM'S FORUM:** The Voice of the Direct Market. The name changes, but the magazine remains the same. We at NMP felt that the new name better conveyed what the magazine is all about. This magazine is your platform, a platform from which you can express and share your thoughts with other readers. It is also a showcase for your talents- both in writing and in art. Plus we will continue to offer in-depth interviews with the people who have made the Alternative Market/Direct Market a strong and quickly growing segment of the graphic story industry. The magazine has become informative, intriguing, and enjoyable- and we have again proven that a magazine can be all that and still maintain its positive approach to comics. We knew that all along, and I'm willing to bet you did, too.

One last note. All of you have grown to appreciate LOC for its own unique virtues, virtues which rest squarely on good commentary and interesting analysis by many of the most interesting writers in fandom. Rest assured that you will still be able to find this type of material in **COMIC FANDOM'S FORUM.** There will always be a **LOC** in the magazine- its just that there will be much, much more.

The Editor

PUBLISHER'S COMMENTS

This time we're in luck. Since the editor has taken over the burden/pleasure of writing the editorial, a logical thing for an editor to do, I have only a few brief comments to make and you have only a few brief words of mine which must be read. I just want to thank everyone, distributors, retailers, and readers alike for their support in our efforts to change LOC into a magazine of which we can all be proud. The response has been great!--and I sincerely expect that the response to this issue will be even better. Since we began this expermint, which climaxes this issue with the transformation into Comic Fandom's Forum, many distributors have literally doubled their normal quantities on this title. That is always gratifying. This issue with its timely piece on the Scarlet Witch, just as she gets her own book, the interview with Mike Gold in which he introduces us to a whole new comic line, the cover by Joe Staton [a fabulous work done expecially for us--thanks millions, Joe!], and all of its myriad other features is probably the best issue we have released to date. We are working very hard to improve with every issue. Hopefully, you will also approve of our more dynamic page presentation which we begin with this issue. It should make for a more attractive package.

Recently both Bob and I attended Chicago Con and had an opportunity to speak with many of our dealers directly about the new direction of both this magazine and it's sister publication, Comics Feature. We were able to show everyone an advance look[advanced at that time] at Comics Feature #19 as well and the response was very enthusiastic!! It does wonders for the ego of a publisher or an editor to know that their many hours and gallons of sweat are appreciated. Talking to our dealers and readers will help us to continue improving the magazines. Meeting many of the writers we normally deal with by phone was also a thrill. Bob finally had a chance to meet with Maggie Thompson, who edits Fantasy Empire for us, and they took off splendidly. Now if only Martin Lock could make it to the states sometime. Well that's really all I had to say at this time. Just that the titles are doing well and we do appreciate your support--a lot!!

FANDOM'S FORUM

by Bryan Uhlenbrock

DR. WERTHAM MAY HAVE BEEN RIGHT, THE BATMAN IS SEXUALLY UNBALANCED

The BAT SEX AND/OR MAN

One of the most interesting portions of Michael Fleisher's BATMAN ENCYCLOPEDIA (properly known as **The Encyclopedia of Comic Book Heroes, Vol. 1: BATMAN**) is Section J of the entry on Batman himself, which is devoted to the Masked Manhunter's various romantic entanglements. Fleisher's fascinating theories on the psychosexual make-up of this legendary character deserve careful consideration by every student of subjects superheroic. A few pithy quotes:

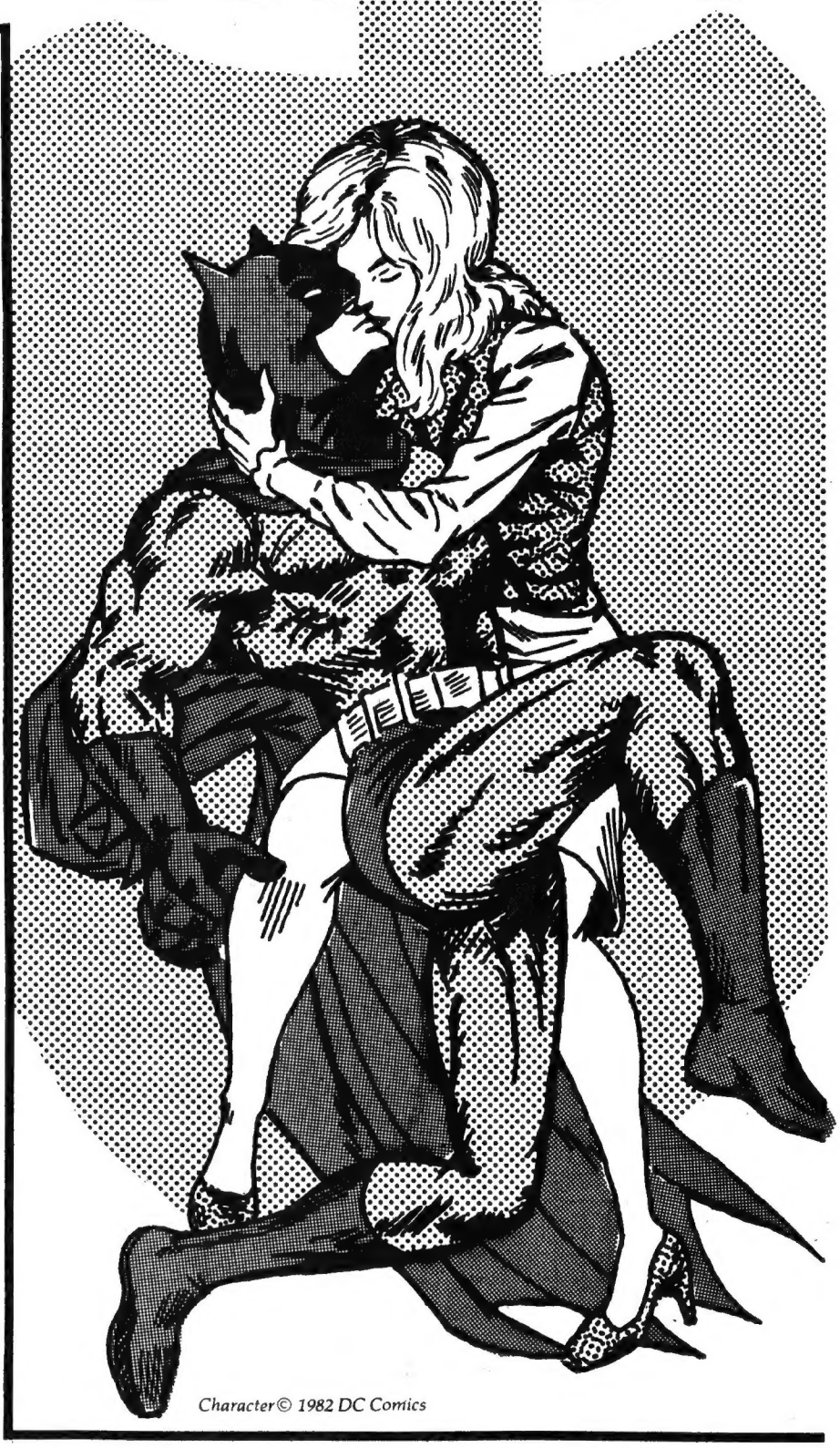
"The sudden, violent loss of his mother while he was still a boy, during the period of his childhood when his psyche was grappling with the complexity of his affectional and erotic feelings for her, left Bruce Wayne with a deep reservoir of unconscious hostility toward women. Like many orphaned children, he saw the death of his mother as a personal desertion. He loved and needed his mother, and yet she left him. The death of a loved one, particularly a parent, is always painful, but for the young Bruce Wayne the unconsciously perceived desertion was an unendurable agony.

"The world of the adult Batman is one from which women have been all but excluded, one in which meaningful relationships with them are all but impossible."

"Batman is unconsciously torn between two types of women, 'good' women and 'bad' women, both types representing conflicting aspects of his own mother as he unconsciously percieves her. Good women, like Julie Madison and Linda Page, represent the kind, loving, dependable mother who fulfilled young Bruce Wayne's every childhood need. Bad women, like the Catwoman, represent the wicked, irresponsible, unloving mother who, by dying, 'deserted' him in childhood when he needed her most. It is to safeguard his psyche against the anguish of another emotional dependancy and another desertion that Batman has withdrawn into a violent, male-centered world from which women are excluded, surrounding himself with a wall of rationalizations, or plausible excuses, for not becoming involved with them.

"When Batman does fall in love, despite his best effort not to, it is invariably with the bad mother, represented by the Catwoman or some other villainess."

As the Encyclopedia goes on to detial both Batman's and Bruce Wayne's inconclusive romances with Julie Madison, Linda Page, Vicki Vale, and Kathy Kane - as well as his ongoing affair with the Catwoman - one thing becomes obvious ; despite Fleisher's well-known and often-denounced antagonism towards women, he may very well be correct on this point. The Batman of the forties and fifties jumped from one superficial romance to



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the next without a care. When Julie Madison or Linda Page began to nag Bruce Wayne about doing something constructive with his life, they were dumped unceremoniously. The only alternative would have been to admit his secret identity, and thus his worth as a prospective suitor - clearly an unacceptable proposal. The Batman of the sixties and seventies never really bothered much with romance, except for an occasional flirtation with the Catwoman, Poison Ivy, or Talia. Beautiful women trouped through the life of milionaire playboy Bruce Wayne like an army of manikins on parade during this later period, the term "playboy" having acquired a somewhat different meaning apres-Hefner; but the reader never learned more than their names, and seldom even that much. Obviously, these oddly-shaped pseudo-humans meant nothing to the infallible Batman.

Recently, however, writers like Steve Englehart, Denny O'Neil, Len Wein, and Marv Wolfman have chosen to re-activate the Batman's long-dormant sex drive. Their choices for prospective Bat-mates: Silver St. Cloud, Selina [Catwoman] Kyle, and the enigmatic [some might say nutso] Talia. Clearly, the time is ripe for the thorough examination of what sex means to the Batman...as well as what his writers **think** it should mean to him.

The Batman's many relationships with the opposite sex can easily be broken down into three basic categories: [A] Platonic relationships with superheroines; [B] Romantic relationships with "normal", non-costumed women; and [C] Romantic relationships with costumed villainesses. We will begin our study with what should be the least threatening of the three categories...but has proven in many ways the most threatening of them all: co-operation with super-powered women.

[A] **Platonic relationships with costumed heroines:** As a member of the Justice League and the partner of a different co-star each and every month in THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD, the Batman has worked on numerous occasions with the likes of Wonder Woman, Supergirl, and the Black Canary. As a card-carrying chauvinist, on the other hand, Batman believes that crime-fighting is no passtime for most women. He repeatedly tried to persuade Kathy [Batwoman] Kane to give up her costumed career out of fear for her safety, and tried to pull the same routine on Barbara [Batgirl] Gordon at the very beginning of **her** career, without much success.

In the pages of BRAVE AND BOLD, he appears loath to work with women at all: more than 100 issues of B&B have presented the Batman/guest format, yet only fourteen have featured a female co-star to date. Wonder Woman has appeared in BRAVE AND BOLD **#**78 [in a mock-feud with Batgirl], 87, 105, 131, 140, and 158. Black Canary took the stage in B&B **#**91. 100 [along with Green Lantern, Green Arrow and Robin], 107, 141, and 166. Supergirl graced the pages of B&B **#**147 and 160, and Zatanna appeared in **#**169. These team-ups were usually accomplished by having the hero and heroine chance across each other in pursuit of a com-

I'M SPLITTING-- AS FAST AS I CAN!
THEN YOU AND YOUR CROOKED LADY FRIEND CAN HAVE THE BATCAVE ALL FOR YOUR LONESOME!
IT DOESN'T HAVE TO END THIS WAY. YOU CAN STAY...
YEAH? LISTEN THIS WAS YOUR DECISION. YOU WANT TALIA TO STAY...
AND IF SHE STAYS, I GO!
BATMAN, YOU MAY HAVE MADE YOUR BED, BUT FRANKLY, I THINK YOU SHORT-SHEETED YOURSELF!
DON'T BOTHER SHOWING ME THE WAY OUT. I KNOW IT!

Robin, who was trained by the Batman and has spent a good deal of his time fighting crime at his side, is angered by Batman's insistance of cavorting with the woman who represents everything that both of them have dedicated their lives to destroying.

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mon foe, or by some other coincidence, as was the case in B&B #'s 87, 91, 131, 140, 141, 147, 158, 166 and 169. As a rule, Batman asks women to work with him only when specifically called for in his carefully-laid plans to catch a criminal, and then always in a role subordinate to his own. In BRAVE AND BOLD #78, he somehow persuaded both Batgirl and Wonder Woman to pretent to be in love with him, in order to lure a super-villain - the Copperhead - out of hiding. (It's difficult to say who comes off looking the worst in this mid-sixties embarassment: Batman for proposing the scheme, Batgirl and Wonder Woman for agreeing to it, or Bob Haney and Murray Boltinoff for foisting the whole mess off on the reading public.) In B&B #100, a wounded Batman was forced to call on some of his Justice League comrades to help him nail a heroin smuggler. He got Green Lantern and Green Arrow to do the majority of the work, while Black Canary more or less tagged along for the ride. Diana Prince, the powerless Wonder Woman, appeared briefly in B&B #105, coming onstage for the first time on page 11 of that 24-page comic. She was, nonetheless, the cover-featured co-star for that issue. Batman had, of course, put in a call for her only because a woman's touch was necessary for plot-related reasons ... and so that this could qualify as an issue of BRAVE AND BOLD, rather than DETECTIVE or BATMAN. He called on Black Canary a mere two issues later, in B&B#107, so that she could disguise herself as an airline stewardess and aid him in breaking up a sky-jacking. Finally, Supergirl bolstered Batman's ego in B&B #160 by requesting his help in recovering her abducted foster-father. The final tally: Batman has called on women for aid only three times (four if one chooses to include B&B #100), but his path has co-incidentally crossed that of various female crime-fighters far more frequently. Batman also appears reluctant to request help from any women who is stronger than he - the only exception to this point was in BRAVE AND BOLD #78, and then his plans required Wonder Woman to make an absolute fool of herself in public, supposedly to prove her love for him! It is also worth noting that Black Canary, who has demonstrated an on-again/off-again affection for Batman, is played for something of a fool in three of her five B&B appearances with him (#91, 100 and 166) and given a distinctly minor role in a fourth (#107). Take careful not of #166 especially: it was scribed by Michael Fleisher himself, and is thematically very interesting...one might even call it revealing, if one were given to atrocious puns. It's a recent issue, pull it out of your collection and scrutinize it if you wish; we'll return to it shortly.

Batman's attitudes towards the various Bat-femmes are inconsistent in some ways, but quite understandable when correctly interpreted. He went to great lengths to keep Kathy Kane from permanently assuming the role of Batwoman, yet had nary an objection to Kathy's young niece, Betty, appearing as Bat-Girl. He seemed amused by Bat-Girl's obvious advances toward Robin, yet was embarrassed when Batwoman tried the same tactics on him. He attempted to prevent the second Batgirl (Barbara Gordon) from launching her crime-fighting career only briefly, and half-heartedly at that. Today, he obviously welcomes her help. Clearly, his objections are not towards a Bat-female as such; but towards a Bat-Woman, which implies a romantic link with the one and only Bat-Man. A Bat-Girl, on the other hand, implies a liason with Robin...an implication which held true in the case of both Betty Kane and Barbara Gordon. In my opinion, this double-standard stems from Bruce Wayne's quite natural desire to provide his ward and surrogate-son with all of the best things in life - including a possible future bride - while he has chosen for himself a life of rigid self-denial. Romance is acceptable for Robin, the lighter, more cheerful, and ultimately freer of the two; but it is something to be avoided by the dark, moody loner who calls himself the Batman.

(B) **Romantic relationships with "good", non-costumed women:** For the most part, Bruce Wayne's liasons with normal women (or, if I may give a slightly different meaning to a common comic-book term, "good" girls) have been quite superficial and mostly for appearance's sake. The hero was supposed to have a girl friend. Period. It didn't really matter whether her name was Julie Madison or Linda Page; whether her hair was blonde, brown, or red; whether she was a screamer or a silent sufferer; as long as she stayed out of the way when there was work to be done. Even a Lois Lane clone like Vicki Vale was acceptable, provided she stuck to her snooping and didn't get any silly ideas about settling down and knitting little pink-and-blue Bat-booties. Kathy Kane, who occasionally masqueraded as Batwoman, was probably the only pre-Schwartz "good girl" to make much of an impression on old cape-and-cowl. His reaction to her recent death, then, is disquieting to say the least.

Although he is alone upon discovering Kathy's body, the Batman shows no grief, shedding not a single tear over her departure. It is simply another crime to be avenged. In his final encounter with the Sensei, the architect of her death, Kathy's name is mentioned only once - and then to Ra's Al Ghul, rather than to the Sensei himself. Batman is only too happy to conclude this sordid episode in the arms of Talia, Ra's Al Ghul's daughter. The implications are as clear as they are unpleasant: Kathy Kane, a virtuous woman, did not mean enough to Batman for him to mourn her passing; but once her murder is avenged (and avenged off-panel at that!) he is free to make love with Talia, a woman of questionable morals, whose father he suspects of complicity in Kathy's death. Obviously, the Batman has no use for good girls. What he wants is a bad girl. This point is underscored in the pages of BATMAN #244: Molly Post, whom Batman describes as "a good girl - one of the best" is rewarded with a brotherly peck on the forehead while Talia receives a far more passionate kiss squarely on the lips.

When seen in this light, the dizzying swiftness of his affair with Silver St. Cloud is not surprising. They meet in DETECTIVE #470, and by the next issue she speaks cryptically of being exhausted after "last night". What did they do last night? Nobody tells us...no one needs to! Silver is shown to be a fairly loose woman, and judging by the circumstances of their first meeting (at a party Bruce Wayne was throwing for Gotham City's elite) she is probably something of a social climber as well. Not at all put out by the fact that her date has abandoned her in order to play pool with the mayor's speech-writer, she uses her freedom to make a rather obvious pass at the most eligible bachelor available - Bruce Wayne. Few

comic book characters smoke tobacco [or anything else] these days, but Silver is depicted as a virtual chain-smoker. She thinks nothing of ordering wine with her lunch, while teetotaler Bruce Wayne chooses Perrier water. The clues, both visual and textual, are abundant - all we need do is add them up. Silver St. Cloud may not be a bad girl, as such, but she's certainly not a good girl! We may charitably call her a nice girl, I think, as defined by the following high-school witticism: "What's the difference between a good girl and a nice girl? A good girl goes on a date, goes home, and goes to bed; while a nice girl goes on a date, goes to bed, and then goes home." Perhaps it's a fortunate turn of events that led Silver to break off their relationship early, for as neither a good girl [and therefore uninteresting] nor a bad one [and therefore unattainable]. Silver St. Cloud posed a singularly powerful threat to Bruce Wayne's continued status as a bachelor...and thus, to his continued existence as the Batman.

Make no mistake about it, either Batman or his writers perceive marriage - indeed, romance in general - as a potential danger. This could either be a reflection of the anxieties held by the mass of their readership [children, who have an understandable fear of adulthood and all it's concerns] or it could be the writers' way of demonstrating the Batman's arrested emotional development. At his core, Batman is still a child, grieving the loss of his parents. The closest thing he has to a family is Robin, and during the years that the two of them worked together, the Batman was shown to have mellowed considerably. Since Robin went off to college, however, the grimly vengeful Batman has resurfaced. For Bruce Wayne to marry and raise a real family would undoubtedly mean the removal of Batman's driving motivation - loss of family - and would signal the end of the Batman in a very real sense.

Even the underworld seems to have grasped this crucial point: in BATMAN #214, a gang-leader named Strack masterminded a plot to marry off gang-moll Cleo Starr to the nemesis of the Gotham underworld. Cleo's front-organization, the Women to End Bat-chelorhood [W.E.B.], funded a media-saturation campaign that prompted hordes of hairbrained Gotham gals to take to the street in a half-protest march, half-lynch mob of matrimony. The only thing that saved the Caped Crusader from a fate worse than death - holy wedlock! - was the intrepid undercover work of Batgirl, who proved her loyalty to the Batfamily by betraying the hopes of females everywhere. Cleo's hard-to-get act, which had all but mesmerized the hapless hero, was replaced by the admission that she had, in fact, fallen in love with the Gotham goliath in the course of her deceptive campaign.

The "women perceived as being dangerous" motif is often used on the covers of BATMAN and DETECTIVE - even when not utilized in the stories themselves. Such as the case in DETECTIVE#'s 384 and 432, both of which featured a shadowy, threatening female without much interior justification. Even when warranted, as in DETECTIVE #'s 380, 391, and 456, the threat is usually either misrepresented or completely overstated. Ginny Jenkins, "the gal most likely to marry Batman...and to be his widow", demonstrates this theme clearly in both of her DETECTIVE COMICS appearances [#'s 380 and 391]. Although she is at no point romantically linked to the Caped Crusader [aside from a fanciful prediction in her high-school yearbook], the covers featuring Ginny protray her as a well-intentioned danger to the Batman. In actuality, she poses as Bruce Wayne's wife in the first issue in order to protect him from her brother; in the second, the danger is not actually to the Batman himself, but to Ginny's boyfriend Tim, who is masquerading as the Batman. The cover of DETECTIVE #456 is perhaps the most striking use of the women/danger theme, and only slightly misleading. The recepient of that issue's "Death Kiss" is Bruce Wayne rather than the Batman...but the sight of Bruce Wayne lying helpless at a women's feet probably wouldn't sell many comic-books. "Angie" [no last name given] was hired by Mr. Vulcan, a rival of Bruce Wayne's, and provided with both poisoned lipstick and a convenient antidote. Even more convenient was Batman's "close friendship" with Bruce Wayne, a relationship that has

SELINA KYLE SAYS NOTHING. HER FACE BETRAYS NO EMOTIONS...
SHE SIMPLY THINKS FOR A LONG WHILE, AND THEN AN ENIGMATIC SMILE CROSSES HER MOST BEAUTIFUL FACE...
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Who better to help Robin save Batman from the clutches of Talia, than Selina Kyle (The Catwoman), a shady lady herself. Robin learns fast.

OUTSIDE, THE PADDING OF RACING FEET...
SELINA, I THINK YOU WERE RIGHT-- STARTING OUR INVESTIGATION WITH FALSTAFF IS THE ONLY THING THAT MAKES ANY--
--SENSE...?
NO.
End

Talia has saved Batman several times. But the question is; does she do this - a) because she loves Batman, b) so as not to leave any incriminating evidence against her father, or c) both of the above.

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come in handy more than a few times.

The concept of a deadly kiss proved too powerful for a single use, however, so Michael Fleisher appropriated the situation for use in BRAVE AND BOLD #166. Black Canary, that issue's co-star, was captured by the Penguin...who then sent a female hireling, disguised as the Canary, to kill the Batman. The murder weapon: a cyanide capsule, to be administered mouth-to-mouth. This particular issue has come under fire by many readers for it's condescending treatment of Black Canary, a supposedly-liberated woman. My own objection is a little more pointed: the Canary's state of undress while being held in captivity renders this one of the kinkiest comics ever to be approved by the Comics Code. Bondage is certainly no fit subject for a "children's" comic-book...nonetheless, there it is, lovingly depicted in the pages of BRAVE AND BOLD #166. It makes one wonder precisely how closely the Comics Code Authority is inspecting the books they purportedly regulate.

[C] **Romantic relationships with "bad" women/costumed villainesses:** According to Section 4, Part B [General Standards] of the Comics Code, "...in no case shall evil be presented alluringly...". There is no way*, in my opinion, that this provision can be reconciled with the fact that nearly every evil woman faced by the Batman [with the obvious exception of Ma Murder] has been presented as the ultimate in temptation. The Batman has been only too happy to admit to the temptation...and on occasion, he has gone so far as to succumb to it!

As he has finally come to admit [in BATMAN #256, page 20, panel 5], "whenever I meet a woman I can care for, she's an enemy! And that's my curse!" It is more a compulsion than a curse...a compulsion as deep as his compulsion to fight crime.

Occupying the primary position in Batman's pantheon of villainous lovers is the Catwoman. Their love/hate relationship has spanned forty years and four personalities: Batman/Bruce Wayne has carried on affairs with both Selina Kyle and the Catwoman. The Earth - 2 Batman went so far as to marry his world's Catwoman, with predictably tragic results. [The objection that said tragedy did not occur until a number of years after the marriage is of little consequence, since the wedding and it's final results were first depicted in the same story.] If there is any one woman who may truly be "meant" for the Batman, one perfect mate for him, it is the Catwoman.

They have so much in common, you see; beyond the obvious similarities in names and working methods [as shown in BATMAN #332, Catwoman's intimidation techniques and night-prowling expertise are remarkably similar to those of her long-time paramour]. Each has formed a moral code of his or her own, rather than accepting society's code at face value...and those codes are quite compatible. Both are unalterably opposed to killing, but neither is above various forms of persuasion that are quite rightly denied the police. Finally, just as Batman's dedication to crime-fighting stems from events beyond his control, Catwoman's criminal activities have been attributed to emotions not entirely her own.

As revelaed in BATMAN #62 ["The Secret Life of Catwoman"], Selina Kyle had once been a law-abiding young airline stewardess who was afflicted with amnesia due to a head injury suffered in a crash. Another blow to the head [suffered while saving the Batman from certain death] restored her memory and left her with feelings of revulsion at her criminal past. She then reformed, aiding the police in a few instances, only to finally return to her criminal ways. Her life has since been a tribute to the age-old prerogative of a woman: she changes her mir

*Unless this quote, taken from Appendix A of Maurice Horn's World Encyclopedia of Comics, proves as inaccurate as some other listings in the same volume. Am I perhaps quoting an out-of-date Code?

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on the subject of reforming as often as Henry Pym changes super-identities.

This inconstancy is probably the source of most of the confusion and misunderstanding between Batman and Catwoman. If she were completely a criminal, he would know how to deal with her: either put her in jail or pretend to "accidentally" let her slip through his fingers (he has proven capable of doing either, depending on his mood). If she were completely reformed, he could either follow his Earth-2 counterpart's lead, or reject her as no longer a threat and therefore no longer interesting. As things stand, she is possibly the closest approximation there will ever be to Batman's Lois Lane (Vicki Vale notwithstanding): his loving nemesis; slightly bitchy from time-to-time, but loads of fun when you catch her in the right mood.

Another woman who "reformed" for love of the Batman was Marcia Monroe, also known as the Queen Bee (BRAVE AND BOLD #64). A rich, spoiled playgirl, Marcia was the exact antithesis of Bruce Wayne until a well-deserved spanking at the hands of the Caped Crusader straightened her up - temporarily, at least. Naturally, she fell in love with the Masked Manhandler ("you're the only man I could ever look up to," she explains) and began to accompany him on his crime-fighting rounds. Crime fighting may be too dangerous for a woman, as Batman asserts for the umpteenth time, but Marcia has only to purr, "I'm a crack pistol shot", and his objections vanish.

It seems that the mighty Batman, whose objection to guns has been shown to stem from his fear of them, is a push-over for a pretty lady with a gun in her hands. Marcia seems like a sure bet to become Mrs. Batman, romancing him as well as sharing his crime-fighting life, when she inexplicably runs off to Europe to resume her wastrel, jet-setting life-style...

eventually falling under the influence of CYCLOPS an international crime syndicate. She is forced to assume the role of Queen Bee, a role which ultimately places her in the middle of a confrontation between Batman and Eclipso. Needless to say, she aids the Batman and then disappears into the night...never to be heard from again. "Someday," intones the grim Gothamite, "she'll pay for her crimes..." but he's not going to be the one who tracks her down. It's just not his style.

It's more his style to save a castrating harridan like Ruby Ryder, the richest (and nastiest) woman in the world, from the electric chair when she is convicted for a cold-blooded murder that didn't quite succeed - unbeknownst to both the authorities and Ruby herself. When she first hired the Batman (for a sizable donation to charity, of course) and charged him with tracking down a disappeared lover, no one suspected that her motive was to murder the missing cad for daring to leave her...no one suspected that she planned to pin the murder on old cape-and-cowl...and no one suspected that the mysterious co-star of BRAVE AND BOLD #95 (and Ruby's one-time suitor) would turn out to be Plastic Man, whose pliable body was unharmed by Ruby's gunfire! If only the same could have been said for his mind... In BRAVE AND BOLD #123, both Ruby and Plas returned...only this time, Plastic Man spent most of the issue in a Batman costume, honestly believing himself to be the Batman and completely under Ruby's evil influence due to a hypnotic spell. This issue revels in women/danger symbology: Bruce Wayne is framed for a crime he did not commit and a Batman-doppelganger is once more in deadly peril due to his choice of a lover. Ruby is finally proven too evil for even Batman to secretly admire her: her predilection for cigarettes smoked through a supposedly-glamorous, foot-long cigarette holder gives way at the moment of truth. "What a delicious triumph," she exults, lighting up a cigar. "I framed Bruce Wayne on false evidence...and my former lover, Plastic Man, is dying in agony in the next room!" It may be acceptable for Ruby to steal, to attempt murder, and to smoke cigarettes (tobacco symbology in today's comics seems to break down as follows: cigarettes are for crooks and low-lives; cigars are for rich men and "touch" guys; and pipes allotted to scientists, police commissioners, and other contemplative types) but cigars, with all their Freudian implications, are beyond the pale for any women...even a rich one. Five pages later, she is in the arms of the law. Her crimes in this issue are roughly the same as in B&B #95, with attempted murder heading the list...but this time she is not allowed to go free. Perhaps that's because the relatively-sensible Metamorpho was on the scene, in addition to the love-sick Plastic Man and the neurotic-compulsive Batman.

All of this is not to suggest that Batman is a complete pushover where "bad" girls are concerned. He has, of course, put his share of women behind bars. The crucial point in determinging his behavior seems to be the

motivations behind any given woman's crime. Crimes committed for emotioinal reason are permissable and even alluring to him, while crimes committed for personal gain are unacceptable. If a woman has become a criminal for reasons beyond her control [Catwoman, Marcia Monroe/Queen Bee, Talia], she may be allowed to escape; if she has willingly chosen a criminal life-stype, she will receive no mercy.

His treatment of Poison Ivy is a good illustration of this point: if she had been genuinely attracted to either Bruce Wayne or the Batman in her first appearance [BATMAN #181], rather than merely using her feminine wiles as part of her campaign to prove herself the world's #1 female villain...if she'd had the sense to give Batman an edited version of her sob-story/origin [which was finally shown - to Wonder Woman, rather than Batman - in WORLD'S FINEST #252] instead of trying to use her chloroform-based lipstick and hypnotic tricks on him...he'd have probably responded to her advances in one form or another, by letting her escape at the very least. As it is, we are left with the impression that Ivy was only using her clashes with Batman to establish her reputation as a villainess in good standing. Once that end had been accomplished [as shown by her acceptance into both the Injustice Gang of the World and the Secret Society of Super-Villains] she obviously had no further need of Batman, and has not confronted him since without taking on the entire Justice League as well, alongside several other super-powered menaces. One thing you can say about Poison Ivy, she's certainly no under-achiever!

The most recent addition to Batman's Gallery of Felonious Females is equally as certain of herself...but Talia, first-born child of the Demon's Head, daughter of the infamous Ra's Al Ghul, could never be summed-up quite that simply. That she has committed innumerable criminal acts has never been disputed, but there is some question as to precisely what she has and what she has not done: Talia takes great pains to see that Batman is not presented with tangible evidence of her own wrongdoing. She has, however, admitted that she once "operated [her] father's business" in the far East "for several years" - and when one remembers that her father controls a world-wide criminal organization, has struggled with the Sensei for control of the widely-feared League of Assassins, and plots world domination in his spare time, one is forced to wonder exactly what that "business" entailed.

Talia is depicted as being capable of practically anything to further her father's schemes. She even helps frame Batman for murder, mistakenly hoping that the publicly-discredited crime-fighter will finally agree to join her father's organization so that the three of them can [dare I say it?] rule the world. The only thing she will not do is allow her beloved Batman to be physically harmed...she has intervened twice to keep him from death, but neither time did she directly oppose her father. In BATMAN #244, she surreptitiously provided Batman with an antidote after he had been stung by a scorpion; and she prevented Professor Vasco Markewitch from shooting a gassed and groggy Caped Crusader in 1978's BATMAN SPECTACULAR. True, she did disobey her father in this second instance, but she did not oppose his plans - Batman had already foiled Ra's Al Ghul's designs. Talia merely prevented her father's minions from taking their vengeance on the weakened Batman. She also had plenty of justification for defying her father in this instance: in her mind, if not in the Batman's, she is in fact wedded to the Dark Knight. To quote Ra's Al Ghul in the second story of that one and only BATMAN SPECTACULAR ["I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU BATMAN AND WIFE"]: "In my nation, the consent of the female and her father are sufficient for marriage." The ceremony was held at sea, and on a ship that Ra's owned; consequently, the father of the bride also served as justice of the peace. That the marriage was not consummated at that time is of no account; it most probably has been since.

At the conclusion of the three-way Batman/Sensei/Ra's Al Ghul go-round [which began with the murder of Kathy Kane, but quickly veered off into other territory], Batman somehow manages to convince himself that since "Kathy's murderers [have] finally faced the consequences of their acts...", he is free to dally for a while with Talia. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth. Batman has no idea whether either the Sensei or Ra's Al Ghul is still alive. All he knows for sure is that

THAT'S IT! I DECLARE A CONTEST BETWEEN US, WONDER WOMAN, TO SHOW WHO REALLY LOVES BATMAN MORE!
I ACCEPT!
HOLD IT, YOU TWO! I WON'T ALLOW IT! IT-- IT'S TOO ABSURD! WHAT ABOUT OUR CRIME-FIGHTING? WHAT ABOUT--?
FORGET IT!
YOU CAN'T ARGUE WITH FEMALES,
ESPECIALLY SUPER ONES!
LET 'EM AT IT!

If you had Batgirl and Wonder Woman competing to prove which of them loved you the most, would you worry about fighting crime?

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...THAT I'D BECOME VICTIM OF MY OWN TRAP! I WAS PLAYING HARD-TO-GET-- BUT, BABY--YOU GOT TO ME! ISN'T IT? SOB! F-FUNNY...
MORE SAD THAN FUNNY, CLEO! IT WASN'T YOUR CLEVER COME-ON, BUT YOUR BRASH FRESHNESS AND DARING--FEMININE YET FORCEFUL...
...THAT LED ME TO HOPE WE MIGHT SHARE A COMMON FUTURE--TOGETHER! IF THIS HADN'T COME OUT INTO THE OPEN, I MIGHT HAVE--
CONTINUED ON 25th PAGE FOLLOWING!
21

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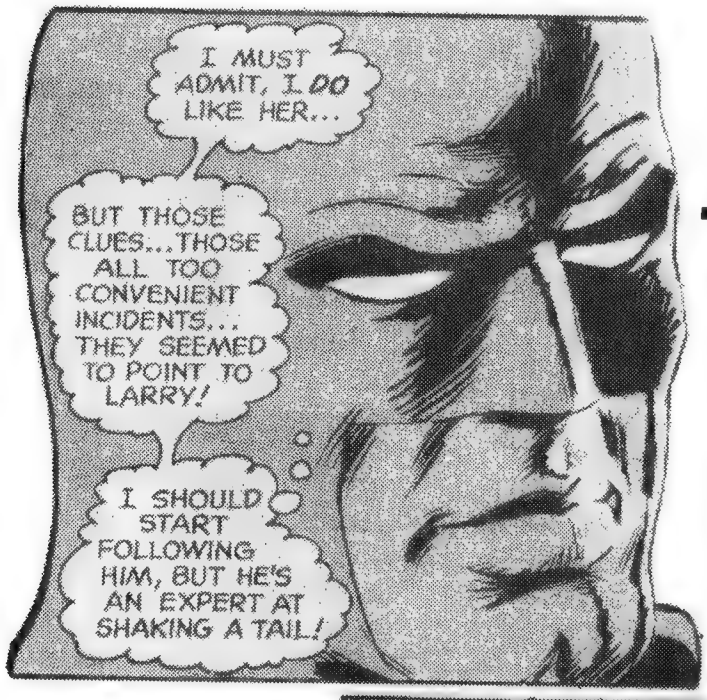
there was an earthquake which might have killed either...or both. Furthermore, since Ra's Al Ghul is described as having died several times [and having been resurrected by the Lazarus Pit each time], Batman should know that any mention of Ra's "dying" ought to be treated with extreme skepticism. But no, Batman seems almost eager to believe that Kathy's murder has been avenged. He must feel justified in taking his romantic reward. In actuality, it is as if he is rewarding Ra's Al Ghul for getting rid of Kathy Kane by giving him reason to believe that his schemes may yet bear fruit: he may yet bind the Batman to his desires through the carefully-considered use of his beautiful, obedient daughter [Batman has as much as stated that her "loyalty is one of the qualities he admires most in Talia. What he left unspoken is that her loyalty is to her father, one of the greatest criminals in the world!]

Thus ends our examination of the Batman's rather twisted behavior towards the opposite sex...and yet, in many ways, we have barely begun to scratch the surface. Batman is unquestionably one of the most complex of comic-book characters, and it may well be that the tangled web of his inner motivations will never be explained to our complete satisfaction. While it is true that I have in no way compiled the definitive, exhaustive statement on the many loves of Bruce [Batman] Wayne, I must modestly admit that such was never my intention. Anyone wishing a detailed history of either Julie Madison, Linda Page, Kathy Kane, Vicki Vale, or the Catwoman, is directed to Mr. Fleisher's excellent BATMAN ENCYCLOPEDIA. I hope I have, on the other hand, raised some important points concerning the Batman's actions, points which may have eluded some readers...possibly even a few of his writers! At times, it seems to me that his suitability as a role model for young boys is very much in question ...perhaps Dr. Wertham was not as far off the mark as we would like to believe!

[I would also like to cop to the fact that the title of this article was, ah, borrowed from the short story, "Sex and/or Mr. Morrison" by Carol Emshwiller. I may be shameless, but I do quote my sources!]


I MUST ADMIT, I DO LIKE HER...
BUT THOSE CLUES...THOSE ALL TOO CONVENIENT INCIDENTS... THEY SEEMED TO POINT TO LARRY!
I SHOULD START FOLLOWING HIM, BUT HE'S AN EXPERT AT SHAKING A TAIL!

FUNNY, HOW MUCH LIKE THE OTHER LARRY HE WAS -- AND HOW DIFFERENT! A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE!
OH, BATMAN, WILL I EVER FIND A NEW LIFE HERE ON THIS EARTH?
I THINK ANYONE AS BRAVE AND BEAUTIFUL AS BLACK CANARY CERTAINLY WILL!

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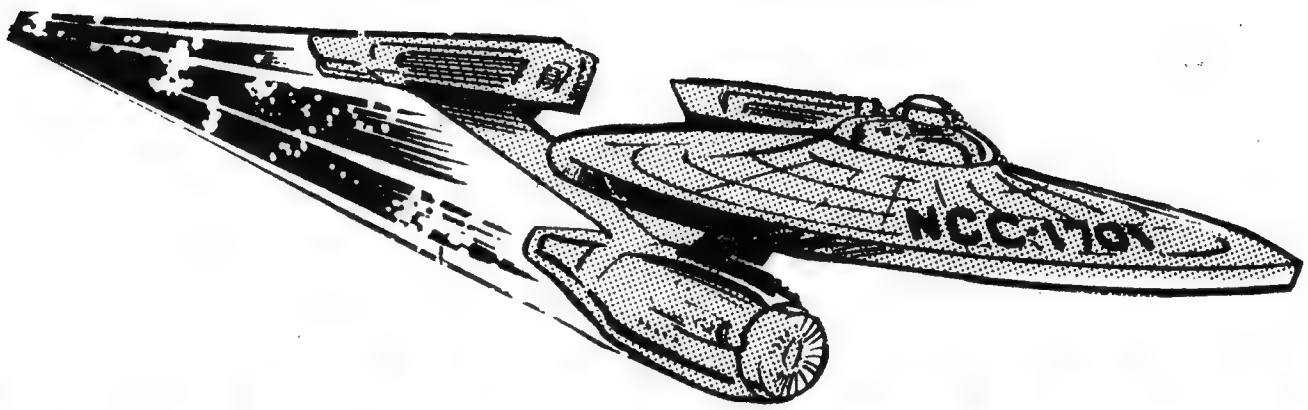

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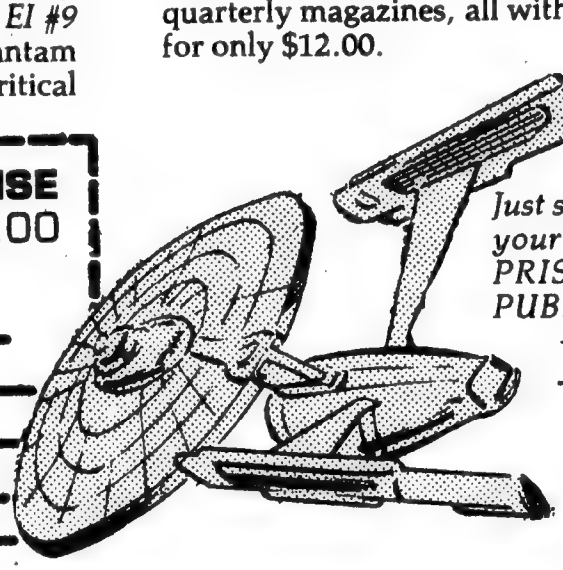

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When we were kids, we didn't get into criticism on a college sophomore level, the way the deep thinkers of today's critical comics fanzines do. We'd dismiss a movie, a comic, or a TV show with the simple epithets "dumb" or "stupid". As in, **"MY MOTHER THE CAR** is really dumb, boy."

In good part, this is because of derivation.

Bear with us just a moment, while we sketch in a hypothetical example. Let's say that someone has an intensely personal experience, for instance, that he is imprisoned for a crime he did not commit, fights a series of legal battles, serves years in a brutally run prison, escapes and spends years as a fugitive, then is vindicated when the real culprit is apprehended.

OK, in order to purge his soul of the agonies he has suffered and to recoup some of the money he spent in vain attempts to free himself, he writes a book about his experiences: an intensely personal, I-lived-it book.

Let us further suppose that the book is a best-seller

UNFAMILIARITY BREEDS STUPIDITY

By Don & Maggie Thompson

and is made into a movie. OK, well the screen play writer has never been unjustly charged with a crime. The star has never been brutalized or pursued by police. The director has never been inside a courtroom or a prison. So their vision is diluted and what they produce is derived only from the writer's experience, filtered and thinned by their lack of the same experience. Perhaps the producer and the studio heads, a bunch of furriers and bankers more accustomed to housing the innocent than being innocent, take a hand in the adulteration of the book as well. Nevertheless, it is a success.

So someone we'll call G. (for Grand) Larceny makes a TV series out of the movie. First, he hasn't read the book (he has never read a book; he made it through school book reports by copying the captions from panels of Classics Illustrated), though he did see the movie. Second, he doesn't buy the rights to make the movie, he just "borrows" the idea (I mean, it's just lying there for anyone to take, right?) and "creates" his own series, about this public defender who moonlights as a private detective and who specializes in helping innocents who have been convicted, have escaped, and are being pursued. The series is a hit, so the next year there are five carbon copies of it, all produced by people who never even saw the movie (and you might as well forget about the book - no one from here on out would be caught dead reading a whole book).

At this point we have several TV shows that are derived from a TV series that is derived from a movie that is derived from a book that is derived from real life.

OK, one of the carbon-copy series has a spin-off and that is imitated and spun-off a few times more and you are further and further removed from real life.

It is at this point that some comics writer sees the latest product of this endless recycling and gets an idea for a comic book...

Extreme, perhaps, but that's about how far comic books are removed from reality. They are written by people who watch TV, go to movies, and attend rock concerts. And read other comic books. It is from this fund of experience that we get such unrealities as —

—A science-fiction story in one of the late, unlamented ACG comics in which the hero, 300 years in our future, wears a 1950-style suit, lives in a 1950-style house, and works as a dentist. A dentist? Three hundred years from now? Yes.

—A story in a recent DC "mystery" comic in which a fugitive is destroyed by his inability to communicate with the inhabitants of a mansion where he has taken refuge. It turns out the place is a home for the deaf. There is, of course, no such thing as a home for the deaf and never has been. The writer was merely working a variation on the old chestnut about the fugitive who is in an asylum for the blind, criminally insane, or terminally ugly.

It should be noted that the editor who approved this story has no more excuse than the writer. The editor cannot be faulted in the first example because the same guy was editor and writer of the entire ACG line.

Derivation of someone else's pre-digested ideas eliminates the need for original thinking. For an example, let's take Marvel's **GHOST RIDER.** It takes no great amount of research to trace the origins of old skullpuss back to **THE EXORCIST.** But, since Marvel's wordsmiths are simply lifting the idea of demonic possession, they don't have to think it out, so most of the obvious ramifications slip right by them.

Tony Isabella was roundly criticized by his fellow writers for (obliquely) using Christ in a **GHOST RIDER** story. The objection to using Christian theology seems to be based on a "We don't believe that stuff" attitude, which is fine by itself. But the strip utilizes Christian demonology, the concept of Hell, the Devil and demonic possession. Like it says in the song, boys, "you can't have one without the other." As William Peter Blatty, who wrote **THE EXORCIST,** knew, the existence of the Devil proves the existence of God.

That's why Blatty's exorcist was a Roman Catholic priest; they have the belief in and cure for demonic possession. Marvel, anxious to jump on a profitable bandwagon, created a demonically possessed hero, a pantheon of demons, a Hell, a Devil [several hells and several devils, but we refer here to the ones featured in **GHOST RIDER**] — but no Christian theology. No, sir.

When you get your ideas from other media, you find yourselves with a Disco Dazzler after disco bit the bag; with Dazzler switching to Country/Western just as the country began to ease toward looking educated again; with a CB hero with a pig costume ripped off from Wonder Wart-Hog when only a few suburban wimps were still talking like hillbillies; with villains ripped off from the Elephant Man [remember the Man-Elephant, that bagged-eyed, droopy-drawered sad sack who fought one of Marvel's "female" characters?] or from the TV movie about Guyana [The Word, who droned onandonandonandon in the most soporific story yet printed].

Somehow, a comics writer/artist hears about hippies. We get Brother Power, the Geek.

Uri Geller comes into the Marvel office and bends a couple of spoons, something any parlor magician can do, and Marvel is convinced it has a real-life superhero. [We won't even mention the Human Fly.]

Enough. What we say isn't going to make any differnece for a very simple reason. Sometimes, derivation works. Sometimes, a TV series ripped off from a movie based on a book based on a life makes it big and someone walks off with big bucks.

And someday, someone is going to hit it big with a comic about a CB-talking, disco-dancing, hippie ragdoll who battles a baggy-eyed, droopy-drawered sad sack in a gray suit with two pairs of trunks [sorry] who talks and talks and talks.

As John Wayne and Buddy Holly were wont to say, "That'll be the day."

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You didn't see **THE MOVIE**
You didnt watch **THE TV SERIES**
And neither did **THE PRODUCER**
But that didn't stop him !

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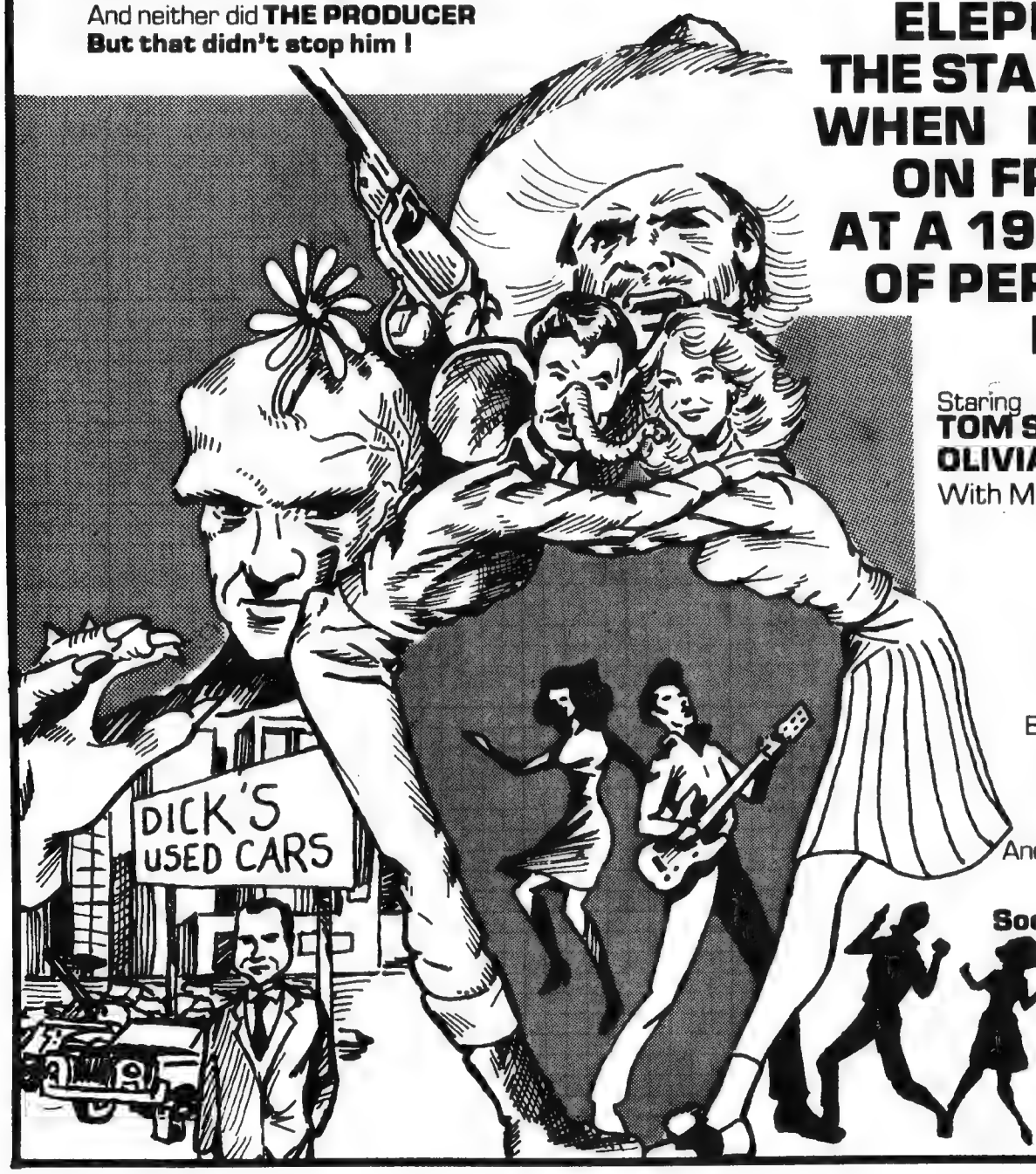

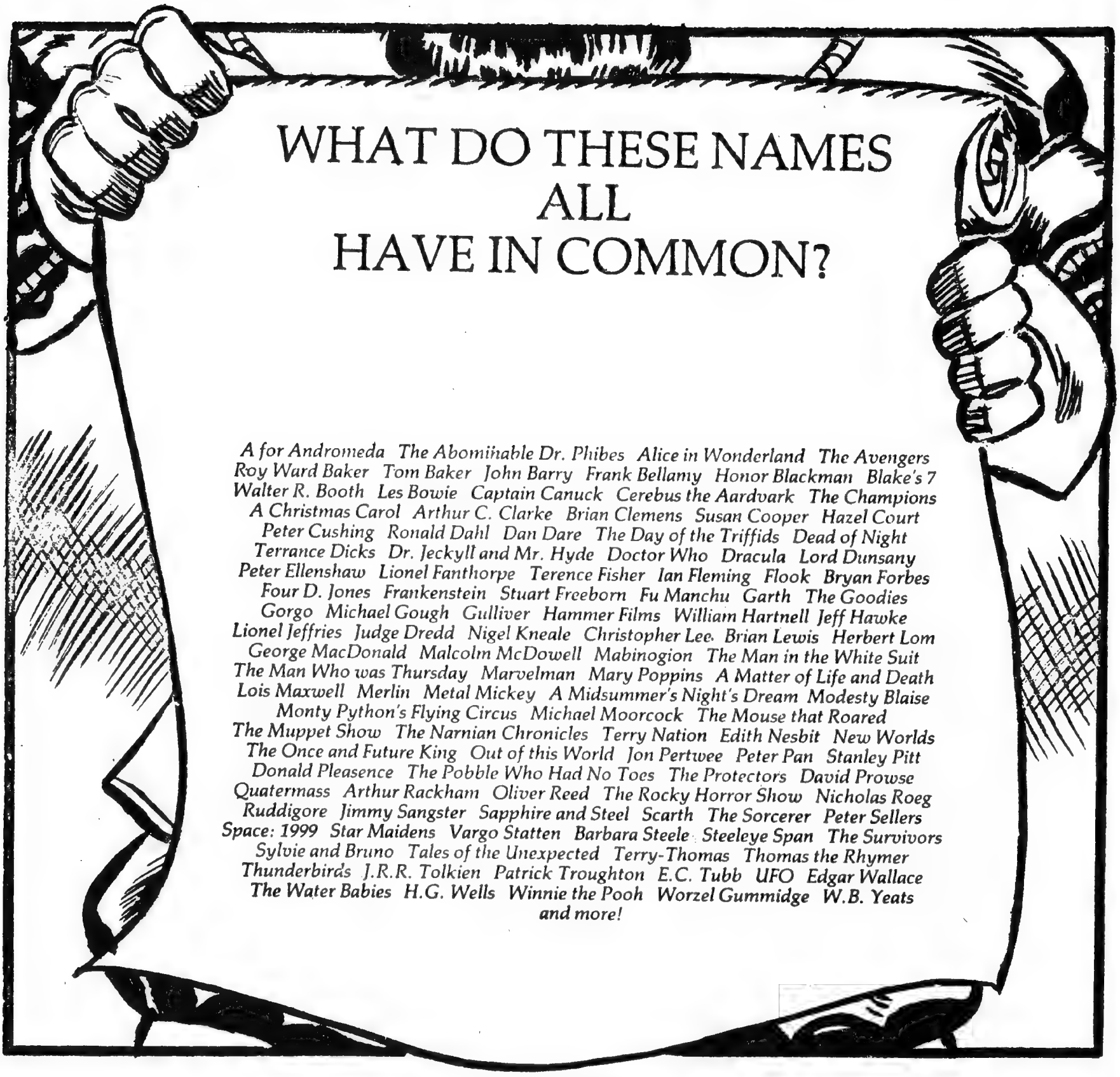

WHAT DO THESE NAMES ALL HAVE IN COMMON?

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SCARLET WITCH

INTRODUCTION

The character of the Scarlet Witch is one which has been ignored by the world of comicdom. The woman named Wanda has existed from the dawn of the Marvel Age. She has endured, growing stronger and more complex. This compact history of this extraordinary woman spans over two hundred issues and several series, yet her depiction has seldom varied. Only the color of her hair has made any appreciable change—from lustrous black to burnished auburn, her natural color! She is ever a woman of beauty and grace, courage and resolve, with sparkling blue eyes, a slight Balkan accent, and a figure to devestate any man, human or non-human. Her early life among the gypsies of central Europe has bestowed upon her a love of life and its adventures. Her career, as both villainess and heroine, is the stuff of which epics are made. Here, in this modest work, is presented the life and times of one Wanda Frank, the sensational Scarlet Witch.

The chronicles of Wanda and her twin brother, Pietro, began in X-Men #4, where they were introduced as two rather unusual antagonists of undetermined origin. In fact, the twins spent a larger part of their lives in ignorance of their childhood or the identities of their parents. Such information was forthcoming much later in their lives as superheroes, and from some rather unique...sources.

According to the collected tales of Bova, the cow woman, and Bob Frank, the Whizzer of the old All Winners Squad, Wanda and her brother were born atop Wundagore Mountain in central Bulgaria in the winter of 1950[possibly mid-November, as both children seem to be possessed of Scorpio-like temperaments]. To the citadel of the High Evolutionary, a scientist dedicated to the creation of a race of New Men through the evolution and education of animals, came a young peasant woman named Magda. She was welcomed by Bova, an evolved cow-woman who served as midwife and caretaker for the offspring of the New Men. Magda told Bova that she had fled in terror from her husband who had suddenly been endowed with superhuman power that had driven him mad with power-lust. She feared that his madness would taint her unborn child—the child he was unaware that she was carrying. Actually, her husband had been attempting to save Magda from death at the hands of humans. His grief gave rise to an oath that mutants would never again be hunted and slain as his family had been, both in Bulgaria and at Auschwitz! Little did she—or anyone else—suspect that her husband, Magnus, would someday exert a profound effect on her offsprings lives as MAGNETO, the mutant Master of Magnetism

Several months later, during a wholly unnatural storm, fraternal twins were born to Magda. Both were normal and healthy, yet, for a brief instant, the body of the girl was limned with a fiery glow similar to those lights flaring outside the citadel. Unbeknownst to Madga or Bova the storm was the manifestation of a cataclysmic battle between the chivalrous New Men[who had been trained in the ways of the Knights of King Arthur by the High

Evolutionary's assistant] and the sinister presence of one Chthon, last of the elder spirits of the Earth. Ages before, the sorceress Morgan Le Fay had imprisoned Chthon in the core of the mountain after an abortive attempt to resurrect and command him through the Darkhold, the mystical tome inscribed by Chthon himself as a means for his future revival. After accumulating sufficient power to strike out Chthon had tried to pervert the New Men in order to make them slaves, pawns in his long-delayed resurrection, but they resisted and forced him to retreat back into the center of Wundagore Mountain. Although his defeat was imminent, his heightened sensibilities touched upon the mutant girl, and, upon realizing the vast potential of the power locked within her body, endowed her with latent magical proclivities which would augment her natural abilities. At some later date, he reasoned, she would be driven by some inner need to learn witchcraft, at which time she would become a suitable vessel for his return. [note:In Tales of Suspence #92, while listening to one of Captain America's war tales, Wanda stated that she and Pietro had been children during the war. Perhaps her involvement in this conflagaration was the war she was referring to, misremembered because of her traumatic childhood.]

BUT, THERE ARE STILL MORE EVIL MUTANTS TO CONTEND WITH... SUCH AS THE SCARLET WITCH, WHO DIRECTS HER INCREDIBLE HEX POWER AT A MAN STANDING NEAR THE ONRUSHING BEAST...
HEY! WH-WHAT MADE MY SUITCASE SNAP OPEN THAT WAY???
LOOK OUT! CAN'T STOP MYSELF... OOF!!

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WHY WOULD SOMEONE SO FINE, SO MASTERFUL, WANT TO ALLY HIMSELF WITH THE EVIL MAGNETO?? WELL, IT IS NOT FOR ME TO QUESTION!
I'LL APPROACH HIM... TAP HIM ON THE SHOULDER, AND THEN... OH, NO! I CARELESSLY MADE A GESTURE! IT WILL CAUSE MY HEX POWER TO OPERATE!!
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In the early stages of her career, Wanda did not have complete control of her Hex power. These random malfunctions caused by her Hexes were not always predictable and could sometimes go astray.

This was only the beginning of an event-filled life often marred by pain and tragedy. Shortly after giving birth to the twins, whom Magda had named Wanda and Pietro[perhaps she feared to give them a surname because it would make it easier for her husband to find them.] Magda walked out into the snow, preferring to end her life rather than endanger her children's welfare. Had she lived Magnus might have forced knowledge of her children from her. Her final message to Bova implored her to find new parents for the twins. In confusion and dismay, Bova turned to the High Evolutionary for aid. Through various channels, the High Evolutionary learned of the presence of an American couple vacationing in the town nearby. By a fortunate stroke of luck this couple, Bob and Madeline Frank, were soon to have a child of their own. He summoned them from the town of East Transia and offered them a place to bear their child. It was his intention to give all three children to the Franks in the guise of triplets.

Within a few days, Mrs. Frank went into labor and delivered a child--a malformed, lifeless mutant. [Only the Franks had known that, years before, both parents had been exposed to intense radiation in the course of their jobs. Their first child, born in 1949, had also been a mutant. Nuklo, as he came to be known in his adulthood, was a radioactive mutant who had to be put into suspended animation at birth to prevent wholesale radiation poisoning of any human within range.] Tragically, Mrs. Frank did not survive this birth as she had her first. The shock of his wife's premature death drove Bob Frank into such a state of shock that he abandoned the twins and fled the citadel.

In view of the twins' second abandonment the High Evolutionary intervened one last time. Appearing as a god, he bestowed the twins upon the shaman of a nearby gypsy camp with orders for him and his wife to raise the children as their own. Since they had recently lost their own children, Ana and Mateo, the couple readily complied. Because of the shaman's own magical practices in the interests of his tribe he and his wife were not overly

surprised when the twins began to manifest unusual powers. Wanda's power in particular was hailed as magic by her proud father, who could only work his spells through a tribal talisman, the Nivashi Stone.

The years that followed the adoption were good ones for the gypsies, especially since they viewed the twins as gifts from their gods--a sign of good favor. Their good fortune could not last forever, the life of a gypsy was an uncertain one. As the twins approached adolescence life in the tribe became more and more difficult forcing the menfolk to steal necessary provisions in order to survive. After a long and bitter struggle, the tribe's luck ran out. They were attacked in their Transylvania mountain camp by irate villagers dedicated to driving them away. They burned their wagons, and in their rage, killed many of the gypsies, among them the twins' mother. In blind panic Wanda and her brother fled the carnage only to fall victim to the rapid waters of the Muresal River. Far downstream the current washed them, battering their bodies and numbing their minds until they emerged many miles away as near-total amnesiacs. The shock-induced veil was never completely lifted even in their later life when they were presented with the truth of their origins.

The following years were filled with turmoil and misfortune. The twins travelled ever southward, stopping only to make infrequent attempts to establish a home in an occasional village. Pietro worked at odd jobs in order to bring home sufficient money to buy food, clothing, and books, which they used to laboriously educate themselves in English and the arts and sciences. Wanda, true to her upbringing, kept the home and tended to her brother's needs. Unfortunately, their stay in any one town was never very long. With the onset of puberty came an unsettling change in Wanda's mutant powers. Once fairly controlled, they were now activated by an unthinking gesture or thought. The superstitious villagers, ever vigilant for the presence of arcane evil, declared her to be a scarlet [glaringly offensive] witch whose hexes caused spontaneous disasters to occur. She and her white-haired familiar, her brother, were often driven from the village on pain of death by fire[purification of a witch and her consorts].

At last, their wanderings brought them back into the shadow of Wundagore Mountain, where they attempted to settle. The townspeople of Transia were no less displeased than the other villagers when their homes suddenly burst into flame when Wanda pointed at them. Their attempt to kill Wanda as a witch was foiled by the awe-inspiring appearance of none other than Magneto--Master of Magnetism and Wanda and Pietro's true father. True to the code of honor upon which she had been raised, Wanda now owed a debt of service to Magneto--a debt of which he took great advantage.

Wanda was forced to join Magneto's newly-formed Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, a society of mutants dedicated to the downfall of Homo Sapiens. During those ignoble years, she was constantly attended by her brother who had sworn to their father that he would care for and protect his sister should they ever find themselves alone and homeless. Save for rare instances, Pietro never left her side for the duration of their stay with the Brotherhood. His constant presence often served as a deterrent to two very undesirable suitors--Mastermind, the Master of Illusion, and the loathsome Toad, both of whom also served Magneto. When their too persistent wooings wore on Wanda's not-inconsiderable patience she occasionally took matters into her own hands and used her power to humiliate them. Ultimately, however, she would be forced to call upon Pietro to protect her from reprisals.

Their greatest fear was not embodied by their fellow mutants, but by Magneto. They feared and loathed him as an inhuman monster, a role he played to the hilt. Because of their youth and bitter memories, he played upon their poor self-images and fear of rejection by normal people to manipulate them into serving his perverted cause. This brainwashing was partially successful on Pietro who was already contemptuous of Homo Sapiens. Wanda, on the other hand, developed a deep-seated fear of being used or controlled by others, especially those who would use her--or Pietro's--powers for their own furtherance. Yet, somehow, despite her ill-treatment at the hands of humans, she refused to believe that Magneto's presumed superiority over humans was justified. She hated Magneto's games of fear and violence against others, just as she hated his abuse of her power and beauty for the sake of his cause. Unlike him, Wanda did not covet power or dominion over Homo Sapiens. She secretly championed the cause of mutant brotherhood with man, through the X-Men who sought to establish for themselves a place at the side of their fellow man. She would, when the opportunity presented itself, defy Magneto and aid the X-Men, as would Pietro. Unfortunately, Pietro did not always share his sister's opinion and could not understand why the X-Men sought to protect those who would persecute and destroy them.

Wanda and Pietro's relationship has long been a unique one in the annals of the Marvel Universe. In their Balkan homeland the oldest male was considered to be the head of the household. This, combined with Pietro's vow to his father, gave him full control over his sister's life. He acted as protector, provider, and parent figure to Wanda, even though he was her elder by mere minutes, while she provided his raison d'etre. Theirs was a highly mutually-interdependent relationship. Without her, he would have no base of support, no one to care for him and for him to take care of. Wanda needed Pietro's protection because her beauty, physical frailty, and feminine, refined demeanor made her appear to be highly vulnerable to attack and injury. Like many heroines of her time, she was considered to be too weak to engage in physical combat, while the very nature of her power forced her to strike at her opponent from afar. Yet she could, when the need arose, lash out viciously in her own or Pietro's defense temporarily forgetting her usual trepidation about using her unpredictable powers against others. She preferred to let Pietro do the fighting for both of them, however.

This mutual protectiveness was ultimately the cause of the twins' split with Magneto. Once Magneto began to willfully endanger Pietro's life in battle with the X-Men Wanda considered her choice to be clear. Her debt to

Magneto was discharged by his dishonorable actions. She managed to persuade Pietro to betray Magneto's forces to the X-Men so that they could destroy the Brotherhood and save mankind from servitude. She also wished to join the X-Men in order to redeem themselves in the eyes of the world. Pietro vetoed this course of action because he feared that the X-Men would use them just as Magneto had. A self-imposed exile of several months in Switzerland ensued during which Pietro reasserted his temporarily-usurped control over Wanda's life.

Several months later, Pietro once more took over the

YOU YOUNG FOOL! DO YOU THINK I'LL LET YOU THWART ME NOW? ONLY DEATH WILL FREE YOU FROM ME! YOU'LL HAVE TO TALK!
MAGNETO! YOU CAN'T MEAN THAT! YOU NEVER TOLD ME THAT WE WOULD EVER DESCEND TO MURDER!!

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Magneto's willingness to do anything and use anyone to further his ambitions cost him the loyalty of Wanda and her brother, Quicksilver.

BUT I MUST FIND A WAY TO INFLUENCE HIM... TO CONTROL HIM!
AH! YOU ARE WHAT I NEED! ONCE HE SETS HIS EYES ON THE SCARLET WITCH, HE'LL BE PUTTY IN OUR HANDS!

QUICKSILVER, LISTEN TO ME! YOU'RE FIGHTING FOR THE WRONG CAUSE! DESERT MAGNETO... JOIN THE X-MEN!
I HATE MAGNETO... MORE THAN ANYONE KNOWS! BUT HE ONCE SAVED MY SISTER'S LIFE! I MUST SERVE HIM!

reins of his sister's life when he decided to apply for membership in the Avengers. He reasoned that joining with such a group of superhuman beings would enhance his and his sister's chances for survival. Now that the old wounds--caused by Magneto's misuse of them--had healed Pietro felt that the time had come for them to redeem themselves. Nonetheless, Wanda counselled caution--she feared being misused again.

Once accepted into the ranks of the Avengers they found their fears to have been unjustified. Unlike the Brotherhood, the Avengers treated each of their comrades fairly and respectfully. Friendship and a deep sense of camraderie replaced the hatred and distrust so prevalent in the Brotherhood. Wanda and her brother were treated with the same respect and mutual acceptance displayed between their fellow warriors. Soon they were proud of their place within this outstanding group and the old fears and hurts of the past dwindled into insignifinance.

Wanda was probably the most unique member of this recently-reorganized group. Not only was she the only distaff member in the present group(only the second one in the Avenger'a short history), but she was also the only Avenger who did not covet Captain America's position of leadership. Due, in part, to the patriarchal society in which she had been raised, Wanda supported Cap's position against all usurpers, including her own brother. Unlike the men, Wanda's ego was never threatened by the assumption of a subordinate role, and her experience with Magneto had instilled in her a disapproval of unbridled ambition. Wanda felt that working as a team was more important than who led the group. All that her support for Cap won her was castigation and warnings to cease her interfering. Cap's treatment of her as a functioning Avenger proved to be no better. Like Pietro, he tended to patronize and protect Wanda, sparing her from the rigors of battle and denying her equal treatment at the hands of the enemy. He seemed to be the only man in the world who was oblivious to Wanda's beauty. Unfortunatley, Wanda was far from oblivious to Cap. He was, like Magneto's temporary ally, the Submariner, "noble...slim, muscular, fascinating...masterful." He possessed that "certain undefinable something"--strength of purpose and personality coupled with gentleness and sensitivity. Wanda seemed to be drawn to such men--men who were enigmas to the world, as would be her future husband, the Vision--because she was such an enigma to herself. Her turbulant life had left her little time for self-examination and exploration while her mistreatment at the hands of others had taught her to keep her feelings under tight control, lest she appear too vulnerable. Unfortunately, such poor self-awareness also caused her to sometimes confuse pity with love.

AND NOW, I'LL BLAST THEM RIGHT OUT OF THE AIR LOCK! FAREWELL, X-MEN...
NO, MAGNETO! YOU CAN'T! YOU MUSTN'T!
BAH! DO YOU THINK YOUR WEAK WORDS CAN SWAY MAGNETO?!
WHA... ?! YOU WITCH! YOU PUT A HEX ON MY CONTROL PANEL! YOU'VE SHORT-CIRCUITED IT!
YOU DARE DEFY THE WILL OF MAGNETO?! I'LL TEACH YOU A LESSON THAT...
YOU'LL DO NOTHING TO MY SISTER WHILE QUICKSILVER LIVES!
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Although Wanda and Pietro remained with Magneto due to a feeling of obligation, they began to rebel against his methods.

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The behavior of another fellow Avenger, Hawkeye the Marksman, only served to confuse matters further. His swaggering bravado disguised a very real affection for Wanda. It disguised it so well that Wanda misinterpreted it as machismo and chided him frequently for his reckless behavior. Like Pietro, he patronized Wanda and bragged about his prowess in battle while ignoring or downplaying Wanda's contributions. Nor was this treatment limited only to Wanda's fellows. Every villain who ever fought the Avengers routinely attacked only the men, obviously in the belief that Wanda was beautiful but powerless. They chose to menace her only when it would serve to lure the male Avengers into a trap.

Such treatment, by friend, foe, and family alike, took its toll on Wanda. Throughout her life, no one had ever taken her seriously. In her Bulgarian homeland, her position in the family never garnered her any respect from Pietro, who treated her as an inferior despite her intellect and talent. His role as head of the family carried through their lives as members of the Brotherhood and the Avengers. He told her what to do and how to think, to the point where her initiative in battle was substancially lower than the men's because of her continuous need for guidance. The same tendency to let Pietro do the thinking for both of them also prevented her from learning about her strengths and limitations. As a result, she agreed with the other Avengers that she was less powerful than they were, and therefore in need of their protection. When threatened she would call for her brother and cling to him, fearing to use her power. Unlike the other Avengers, Wanda never bragged about her powers, although she would often praise Pietro's.

Wanda was a woman out of touch with herself. Being sister to a man as volatile as Pietro had caused her, at a very young age, to exercise strong control over herself as a counterbalance. Such control, coupled with her fear of appearing vulnerable, masked her true strengths and abilities from herself. This manifested itself in a number of ways. Her lack of knowledge about her powers often caused her to overestimate her enemies' strengths while ignoring her own. Occasionally she could overcome her fears and fight valiantly, but despair was never far away. Her doubts about herself extended not only to the psychological plane but to the emotional and physical ones as well. Although extraordinarily beautiful, she was totally oblivious of the effect of her presence on others because she could not see the beauty in herself. Such insecurities about her worth as a warrior and a woman kept her from attempting anything new or threatening, such as her first love, acting. She felt sure that she lacked the competence to succeed because she had never examined her own abilities and limitation, oftentimes refusing to trust her own feelings without substantiation from Pietro.

Most significantly, Wanda feared and dreaded her powers because of her poor self-awareness. She knew little of the effect of her own power. It fluctuated widely in strength and effect, often surprising everyone including Wanda. All she knew was that anytime she gestured and concentrated slightly a calamity would occur which was not always detrimental. If it was too strong, or was reflected back somehow, a "splash effect" would occur which could affect Wanda as well. Regardless of the strength of the hex Wanda often suffered severe debilitation after a single casting. In later years, her endurance increased to the point where she could cast three hexes a day before weakness struck.

Because of its unpredictable nature, Wanda was not overly surprised when over a period of several days her power[and Pietro's] began to fade. She and her brother were forced to take a leave of abscence so that they could return to their homeland in the Balkans in hopes that some native element there might restore their powers. While in Transia, they both underwent special diathermic treatments in the belief that such scientific methods might speed their recovery. In actuality their

powers had been weakened by Chthon's will in an effort to force Wanda to return to Bulgaria and embark upon her tutelage in witchcraft. Unfortunately for Chthon, a crisis intervened and forced Wanda to return to the fold of the Avengers in order to enlist their aid against an extraterrestrial threat to the Earth. Her artificially reduced powers returned naturally accompanied by a new surge of confidence in her fighting prowess and a desire to be more independent and self-directed.

A worthy goal, but one not to reach fruition. Shortly after their return to the Avengers, while on monitor duty, the twins received a mysterious distress call from a seemingly deserted castle. They responded to the call without notifying the other Avengers, unwittingly causing their own misfortune. No sooner had they entered the castle keep than they were attacked and skillfully defeated by their arch-foe and father, Magneto. He imprisoned them to prevent their loss a second time. He knew that they would be invaluable to his new Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, yet he also knew that they would never consent to rejoin him without some very powerful persuasion. Since the old debt was considered discharged, Magneto decided to create another ploy. He attempted to convince them that he had reformed; he wished to live in peace with humans. It was his wish that the mutant population be allowed to live apart from humans but on an equal level with them. Skeptical as the twins were, they consented to accompany him to the U.N. where Magneto would make his plea for friendship and equality. Once upon the podium, however, Magneto's contempt for the human race erupted in a demand for world dominion and supremacy of Homo Superior. Everyone present, with the exception of Pietro, rebelled. Even Pietro was unsure and susceptible to pressure from either direction. Magneto, seeing that Wanda could easily sway her brother to the side of the attacking Avengers, caused a guard to fire a bullet at Wanda—a bullet so precisely angled as to graze Wanda's temple and cause a mild concussion. As rage overtook Pietro Magneto directed his wrath toward the defenders of humanity, turning Pietro into a machine of destruction to be wielded at will.

Magneto's well-laid scheme may have gained him Pietro's support, but it cost him dearly. The bullet which grazed Wanda's head caused a mild concussion robbing her of her power and presence of mind. Magneto had thus deprived himself of an ally, albeit an unwilling one. The only possible advantage was that, in Wanda's confusion, she could not muster up the logic or fervor necessary to persuade Pietro of the folly of his actions. Thus, Magneto was able to maintain his control over Pietro by promising to restore Wanda's power and memory.

Despite Magneto's refusal to honor his promise after many weeks Pietro could not bring himself to leave with Wanda. His only hope, he felt, lay with Magneto. He was too fearful to seek the aid of humans, whom he distrusted intensely. His only other hope was that his old nemesis, Professor X, mentor of the X-Men, could use his advanced science and mutant ability to help his sister.

Unfortunately, he discovered that he had waited too long—Professor X[it seemed] was dead. Pietro returned to Magneto's stronghold and broke down in his sister's arms. During his absence, Wanda had come to fear that he had abandoned her, feeling her to be a burden in her present state. Once this misconception had been laid to rest, she comforted him. Ironically, in a time of despair, Pietro sought strength from the woman he had always felt to be weak and vulnerable. Despite this momentary lapse he refused to listen to his sister's pleas to abandon Magneto and seek aid elsewhere. He still clung to the vague hope that Magneto would cure Wanda. It was not until a particularly devastating battle with the X-Men that Pietro recognized the validity of his sister's arguments, nearly losing his life in the process. While the X-Men engaged Magneto in his control tower, the

NEXT, AS MAGNETO TAKES HIS SOMEWHAT CAPTIVE AUDIENCE ON A CONVEYOR-BELT TOUR OF HIS UNUSUAL HEAD-QUARTERS...
...AND NOW, YOU HAVE BOTH BEHELD MY POWER --WHICH DWARFS THAT OF THE HUMAN MULTITUDES!
WHAT SAY YOU? SHALL OUR BROTHERHOOD LIVE ONCE MORE--AND ASSUME ITS RIGHTFUL PLACE ON THIS PLANET?
DON'T LISTEN TO HIM, MY BROTHER!
I KNOW WELL OF YOUR BITTERNESS TOWARDS THE HOMO SAPIENS--BUT, REMEMBER OUR OATHS AS AVENGERS!
THAT I CAN NEVER FORGET, WANDA! AND YET...
--NEITHER CAN I FORGET THE SCORN WITH WHICH THE HUMANS REGARD ANY WHO ARE DIFFERENT FROM THEMSELVES!

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Even after becoming Avengers, Wanda and Pietro were not completely free of Magneto.

siblings escaped, accompanied by the Toad.

Wanda wished to search for some way to restore her power but eschewed the aid of humans in her endeavor, since she felt guilty of nearly betraying them to Magneto. With a strength of purpose and patience unequalled by either her brother or the Toad, she scoured the occult libraries of central Europe, searching for something she could not put a name to. Again, Chthon's presence was being felt as he subtly guided her actions, forcing her to turn toward witchery. This perplexed Pietro, who felt that Wanda's powers could not be restored through arcane methods because it was an inborn ability--one which was being suppressed by the wiley Chthon. Although she possessed the latent power of witchcraft, she could not understand any of the spells in the grimoires, thereby frustrating Chthon's desires a second time. Chthon was not the only one with bruised expectations. Wanda was on the verge of despair when the Toad, who had avidly assisted Wanda out of unrequited love, remembered the existance of one last library. There, seemingly by accident, Pietro found a strangely-glowing tome which struck a chord in Wanda's mind. The power embodied in the tome compelled Wanda to read a certain spell which, when spoken by a mutant[or, possibly, a latent witch], would open a portal between dimensions. Through this portal emerged Arkon, a self-styled warlord of a parallel world. His quest was twofold: first, to kidnap certain scientists to assist him in his bloodthirsty scheme; and, second, to procure for himself a wife--Wanda to be precise. After fulfilling both parts of his plan, he vanished, leaving behind an enraged, resolute Pietro who lost no time in contacting the Avengers and enlisting their aid. Their mission was an urgent one--to stop Arkon from using Earth technology to cause a worldwide nuclear holocaust, the energy from which would be used to refuel the "light ring" that provided his world with light and heat.

To Wanda Arkon was a desirable man, possessed of many of the attributes she found desirable in a man--all except gentleness and compassion. In order to win her love, Arkon persuaded Wanda that it would not be necessary to destroy her world in order to save his. Still, this did not demonstrate any capacity for compassion or mercy on his part, so Wanda took it upon herself to teach him these things. Barely had the lessons begun than the Avengers arrived via Thor's Uru mallet to thwart his plan. Once Wanda learned of Arkon's deceit she loathed him. To teach her respect he abducted her a second time--this time, back to Earth, where she could witness the devastation he would cause. The Avengers followed and frustrated his attempt at destruction long enough for Iron Man and Thor to find a way to reenergize the rings, rendering Earth's destruction unnecessary. In an act of newly-awakened compassion, Arkon released Wanda from her enforced betrothal so that she could learn to love him of her own accord.

Upon her return to her native dimension, Wanda learned that her powers had been restored to her, seemingly by a natural process of healing. A more probable explanation, although unknown to Wanda, was that Wanda's transferance to Arkon's dimension had broken Chthon's grip on her allowing her power to regenerate until it had reached its former level of potency. However, its manifestation was now subtly different. Rather than being accidentally discharged through a careless gesture Wanda was forced to concentrate on the desired effect while joining her hands before her, fingers outstretched and palms facing her foe. Use of her hex produced a peculiar halo effect around her hands--a violet-tinted hex sphere which, once formed, exploded outward to strike her intented target. Non-magical in nature, her hex was nonetheless capable of disrupting magic, probably because of the effect of her cursory study of witchcraft on her latent magical powers. Although still unpredictable, Wanda was now able to exercise limited control over the effect of her hex. She was even able to wield it by hearing as well as line-of-sight, a valuable skill which increased her competence in battle, as did her ability to use her hex three times a day before tiring.

Wanda's second stay with the Avengers proved to be a time of growth and change, starting with the Red Wolf affair. Red Wolf was an Indian warrior who teamed up with one group of Avengers in an effort to avenge the murder and exploitation of his people by an unscrupulous profiteer. Wanda chose to accompany Red Wolf, the Vision, and Goliath, but could not expain why, even to herself, because of her lack of self-awareness. She had even blinded herself to the dawning of love for the self-possessed Vision by convincing herself that he was cold, aloof, and forbidding, whereas in reality she was as cool and aloof as he. Yet, inexplicably, she was drawn to him because he embodied all the qualities she admired in a man save, she thought, those aspects of tenderness and nurturing she had always found in Pietro. Later when the Vision surrendered to the profiteer's henchmen and became his unwilling defender rather than endanger Wanda's life, she realized that she could bestow upon him the love that she had withheld from the emotionally-flawed Arkon.

Another period of self-enlightenment followed the formation of the short-lived Lady Liberators, a collection of all the distaff members of the Avengers. They were led by the Valkyrie, a militant superheroine who took advantage of the suppressed anger of the women caused by being treated as "second-class" Avengers--patronized and downplayed by the male members. Wanda's hidden fear of domination and her emerging independence from her overly-protective brother seemingly made her an ideal member of the Liberators but was later the cause of her rebellion against the Valkyrie, who was actually the Enchantress in disguise. During a battle between the Liberators and the male Avengers Wanda made certain that she attacked only their common enemy, Klaw, rather than any of the male Avengers as her sister Liberators did. When the Enchantress finally revealed herself and overcame the Liberators with her magic. Wanda, who had shaken off the Enchantress' mesmeric spell through mistrusting her motives, defeated her by reflecting her spells back upon her. Once Wanda recognized that she was being used again, this time by one of her own sex, it was easy for her to turn against the Enchantress, just as she had turned against Magneto. In so doing, she learned that she could free herself from the domination of others--Pietro included--with a little applied effort and some faith

in her own strength of will.

Unfortunately, the road to maturity is a rocky one at best, especially for a young woman with little experience in the world of human affairs. Wanda's isolation from other humans--due to her awesome, inhuman power and the fear it inspired in mortal men--left her ill-prepared for the triumphs, tragedies, and stalemates of even the most uncomplicated courtship, let alone one with a brooding, insecure android with delusions of worthlessness. Once she had worked up the courage to make the first tentative overtures toward him, during their imprisonment by Ronan the Accuser at the onset of Kree-Skull war, she expected that the Vision would respond in kind. She was unprepared for the brutal rejection she received. She perceived it as a personal slight when, in truth, it was merely an expression of the Vision's insecurities and lack of self-esteem. This, when combined with Wanda's personal fears and confusion, served to divide them for many months to come. He viewed his rejection as an act of fairness to Wanda, of who he felt unworthy, while Wanda saw it as a judgement of her, an indication that he felt that she was unworthy of him. The fact that she knew so little of the Vision's emotional capacity only clouded the issue more.

As if Wanda didn't have enough problems trying to deal with such an unwilling suitor, along came Hawkeye the Insufferable. After an enforced hiatus from the Avengers, Hawkeye came to believe that he had fallen suddenly in love with the beautiful but preoccupied Wanda Unfortunately, he was oblivious to the dynamics going on between Wanda and the Vision and failed to realize that he didn't really love Wanda but, rather, the Black Widow[who had left him several months earlier]. His attempts to prove to both Wanda and himself that he was in love with her only served to exasperate and confuse both Wanda and her frustrated would-be lover, thereby creating unnecessary tensions between them. Further tension was provided by Pietro who, upon learning of Wanda's feelings for the Vision, promptly disapproved. Although he was concerned about his sister's emotional

OHHHHH-!
PUH-THNG
WANDA--NO!!
SHE'S BEEN HIT! A BULLET--GRAZED HER TEMPLE!
PIETRO--I HAD TROUBLE GETTING THRU THE DELEGATES ON FOOT!
IS WANDA--?
SHE STILL LIVES--STILL BREATHES! BUT, IT WAS HUMANS WHO DID THIS TO HER--! HUMANS!!
HE'S WILD-EYED--ALMOST IN A STATE OF SHOCK! GOT TO REASON WITH HIM, BEFORE--
LOOK OUT, QUICK-SILVER!
THE AVENGER CALLED GOLIATH--HE'S LUNGING AT YOU FROM BEHIND!

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welfare he was even more strongly motivated by a fear of being replaced in her affections by an "unfeeling machine". He tried everything he could to make Wanda doubt her feelings for the Vision and to dismiss them as an infatuation.

Pietro's tactics proved to be highly effective. Wanda's independence and conviction in her own judgement were still in their fledgling years. Under Pietro's pressure tactics she began to doubt her feelings for the Vision, which caused her to wonder if a mutant and a synthetic man could ever truly love one another. She knew how she felt about him, but was fearful of further rejection if she pressed the Vision for any kind of declaration of emotion. Yet, at the same time, she needed to know if he felt anything at all for her. She sensed his ambivalence but was uncertain as to the cause of it. Was it because he felt that she wasn't beautiful enough, intelligent enough, talented enough for him? Why wouldn't he lower his defenses for her? Would she finally break through, only to be hurt again, as her brother warned her she would? Wanda feared the answers to these questions as much as she yearned for them.

In the midst of this enervating emotional crisis came another, equally unsettling one. As the result of the genocidal intentions of a new generation of Sentinels, Wanda was kidnapped and spirited away to a hidden base, where she was to serve as an energy source for the machines instrumental to the culmination of the Sentinels' plan. At the Vision's and Pietro's urging the Avengers tracked the Sentinels to their lair and engaged them in battle. Before the battle began Pietro split off from the main group in the hope of finding some way of defeating the Sentinels on his own. He was attacked by a guardian Sentinel who succeeded in wounding Pietro seriously. Shortly before he lapsed into unconsciousness Pietro was whisked away by some unknown force. His disappearance nearly drove Wanda into a frenzy. Spurning the company of all, including the Vision, she cloistered herself in the monitor room sparing no effort in her search for her lost brother. The fear of being abandoned, so all-pervasive as a child, struck at her as never before. Her desperation blinded her even to the torment her desired lover was enduring after his ego-shattering confrontation with the siren Lorelei. His suddenly-renewed disbelief in his own humanity caused him to withdraw from Wanda and her search while she, in turn, turned from him thinking that he no longer cared enough for her to help her. Yet, at her moment of ultimate hopelessness, fear, and anguish, he came to realize his feelings for her and tentatively reached out to her, an action which was readily reciprocated by Wanda. Enmeshed as they were in their personal crises they had failed to realize how desperately they needed each other.

The next several days saw a massive change in Wanda Although still concerned about her brother's whereabouts she was aglow with new confidence and optimism for the future. The Vision, too, had undergone a decisive change. With the help of Wanda's logic, compassion, and warm humor he had been made to see the error in his own perceptions about himself. She encouraged and supported the development of his human attributes without rejecting his mechanistic ones. Their new relationship brought a new security and happiness never before experienced in her fear-haunted life. Despite her newfound happiness she was torn between her love for the Vision and her concern about her brother's warnings. She so wanted to love the Vision, despite the prevalent societal judgements of him. After all, weren't they both outcasts in Man's world? Didn't they both need each other and find pleasure in each other's company? Weren't they alike in so many ways? What could possibly come between them if they truly wanted to be together?

The answer to the last question came in two forms. The first was Pietro. Upon discovering that he was not only alive but also engaged to be married to the Inhuman Crystal, who had rescued him from the Sentinel's lair, Wanda's joy knew no bounds. She decided to share her good fortune with her brother. Pietro's instant, violent disapproval of her newfound love came like a slap in the face. She had believed his promise, made during the battle with Leonard Tippit, that he would stop playing "father figure" to her and respect her judgement, yet here he was dictating to her whom she could love. Due in large part to her "Americanization" she was able to defy his edict but unable to deal with the conflict it engendered within her. Although she loved her brother dearly she was also passionately in love with the Vision. Should she choose between them, as Pietro demanded, or follow Cap's advice and endure, knowing that making such a choice would not be her responsibility but her brother's?

The second answer came in the form of a group of minority haters who called themselves the Human Bombs Even though they feared mutants as superhuman freaks they feared androids who were capable of emotion even more. They saw the Vision as a threat to the entire human race and decided to obliterate him. One such attempt seriously injured the Vision and inspired in Wanda a new emotion—group prejudice. She began to hate humans as unreasoningly as they hated her. She began to believe that Pietro's mistrust of humans was justified. In her paranoia she felt that even her teammates, who accepted the Vision as a human-machine, would not let her forget that he and she were different. Suddenly, all the hate, the mistrust, the violence that had been heaped upon her by the world for so many years were now turned back upon the world as it faced the wrath of the Witch.

It was during this time that a new factor was added to the equation in the form of Mantis, Mistress of the Martial Arts. After saving Wanda from a dangerous situation, she was accepted[unofficially] into the ranks of the Avengers as the Swordsman's consort. The lonely Wanda welcomed her as a friend and confidante, a decision she would later regret.

After a gruelling battle between the Avengers and the Defenders which led to a confrontation with Dormammu--resolved almost singlehandedly by the Scarlet Witch--Wanda's hatred of all things human consumed her. She could not tolerate even the smallest flaw in any of her teammates, except the Vision, feeling that the taint of humanity made them as despicable as the humans who had persecuted her and her lover. Her greatest desire was to distance herself from humans--all humans--so

that they could no longer hurt her and the Vision. She did not realize that she was merely substituting her own prejudice for the more common human variety until it was pointed out to her by the Vision who, though a near-victim of human hatred and violence, bore the humans no malice because he recognized their true worth. Wanda was amazed by his attitude since she thought that he would feel the same way she did, but, in the end, she bowed to the strength of his logic.

It was about this time that Wanda uncovered her first clue to her origin. During a pitched battle between the newly-awakened Nuklo and the Avengers, Wanda learned that the Whizzer--a.k.a. Bob Frank--was father to both the nuclear mutant and herself. Although this was later proven to be but a half-truth, Wanda was nonetheless pleased to have found a family to which she and Pietro could belong.

This unexpected but joyful gain was very nearly countered by a disastrous loss. Wanda's relationship with the Vision, which had travelled a difficult path since its inception, now faced a new divisive force. Through a series of misunderstandings, Mantis and her lover, the Swordsman, each thought that the Visions's matter-of-fact observations about the Mantis' physical and mental prowess was secretly declarations of love. For a while Wanda was oblivious to this situation However when she learned about Mantis' attentions towards the Vision she felt betrayed by both Mantis and the Vision, who was innocent of any wrongdoing and thoroughly confused by this new state of affairs. Wanda felt that the Vision should have discouraged Mantis' attentions when, in fact, the Vision had paid them no heed because of his love for Wanda. In his opinion the entire quadrilateral that had been formed was ridiculous and unworthy of concern. Wanda disagreed. She felt that the whole matter was quite grave and in need of resolution--mainly by the eradication of Mantis as a rival. As long as Mantis was around, Wanda reasoned Vision would naturally be drawn to her because of her near-perfect mind and physique. Once again Wanda felt the pangs of insecurity. After all, her power was only a mutant one not a skill which had to be mastered before use. The fact that Mantis was also beautiful didn't help the situation any. During this time, Vision had always remained faithful to Wanda in all respects but she feared that this was simply an act, that Vision was really controlling his emotions and concealing his love for Mantis from her. Despite her doubts, she was determined to best her rival and win back her lover's affections. This new determination later permitted her to challenge her brother's disapproval and demand that he accept her choice of the Vision as her lover. This shocked Pietro; in their homeland of Bulgaria, women never dared demand equal recognition or treatment of their menfolk, but Wanda's personal growth had reinforced her confidence in her own judgements. In spite of Pietro's continued antagonism she was able to rupture the old parent-child bond shared by her and her brother and emerge as her own woman.

Upon her return from Pietro's wedding in Attilan, Wanda and her fellow travellers were beset by a mystical attack upon the person of Agatha Harkness, babysitter to young Franklin Richards. As Miss Harkness dispelled the attack Wanda sensed her great occult power and was drawn to it, as Chthon had intended. Miss Harkness was able to detect the mystical talent latent in Wanda's soul, the same talent implanted there by Chthon. Wanda knew only that she wanted to learn a skill, something which would make her Mantis' equal in the Vision's eyes. Perhaps she felt that such tutelage would teach her how to control her frightening and unpredictable hex power through greater self-awareness, as well as help her to understand her heretofore unexplained attraction to the occult arts. Her need to expand her awareness and talents succeeded in pushing all other considerations aside including, temporarily, the Vision.

Her first lesson with Miss Harkness proved to be a memorable one. She was pitted against a necromancer named Necrodamus, who promptly dispatched Miss Harkness. Wanda was stunned and confused but, due to her harrowing experiences as a child, she did not possess the normal fears and phobias about the occult. She struck back as only she could, using her hex power to batter her foe until her strength was exhausted by her third and final hex. Even though she was outclassed she fought on until her defeat was imminent. At the last moment she struck out with a FOURTH hex which defeated Necrodamus. At a moment of desperation, with the assistance of Miss Harkness, she had learned how to tap her inner strength.

Wanda had little time to revel in her achievement. Within minutes, she, Mantis, and Miss Harkness were kidnapped by Kang the Conquerer, a madman intent upon possessing she who was to become the Celestial Madonna. Wanda was certain that she was fated to become the Madonna since Mantis was "no Madonna" in her opinion. She felt that the Celestial Madonna's "coming of age" was her turning to witchcraft, while, in actuality it was Mantis' emotional maturation. Mantis was still oblivious to her eventual destiny and hoped that the Madonna would be Wanda so that she could have the Vision. According to Mantis, Wanda's desire to "discover herself"--to come to terms with her own condition and to develop her skills--had cost her the Vision's affections. Unlike Wanda, Mantis had never learned to be an independent woman. When both were freed by the Vision Mantis attacked the enemy in her usual fashion while Wanda called upon her newfound inner strength and pulled a meteor down from the skies to vanquish her foe. Her casual endangerment of Mantis' life demonstrated the presence of a hidden streak of ruthlessness and a desire for vengeance cultivated over the years of her persecution as a mutant.

After the defeat of Kang, Mantis and the rest of the Avengers departed for Vietnam in order to bury the recently deceased Swordsman and to discover the secret of Mantis' past. Wanda, although she wanted to be with the Vision, decided to stay at the mansion with Miss Harkness to continue her tutelage in witchcraft. Within a few days of her initiation into the occult lore Wanda was able to utilize her hex power in a new way, by forcing it to flow through a carefully-directed channel rather than permitting it to burst forth as it had previously. In this way, she learned to control all natural

things, such as the weather and all organic substances. This type of witchcraft, far from being satanic worship, was actually closer to the older "wiccacraeft", or "craft of the wise one" The practitioners of this craft could call upon the "Earth Mother"-Chthon's sister, strangely enough--and a "horned god", similar to Janus, who was a god of power and fertility. [Note: This would explain the horned masks used as props by Agatha Harkness during Wanda's tutoring]. Those who knew how to call upon these dieties were granted power to control the weather, heal, materialize the dead, and cast simple spells. However, in her eagerness to learn, Wanda tried to absorb too much and was thus rendered easy prey to the control of another, stronger being. This being forced Wanda to battle Moondragon, then abducted her to another dimension--that of the Dread Dormammu. He intended to torture and kill Wanda as revenge for his earlier defeat at her hands. His plans were disrupted by the arrival of the Vision, who had been led to Dormamlair by one of Immortus' devices. Once the Vision proved to be immune to the weakened Dormammu's attacks Dormammu forced Wanda to do battle with her lover. Although his power had been sufficient to control her actions it could not suppress her love for the Vision. Horrified by what she had done her inner strength surged through and broke his control. Through the use of her witchcraft, she restored both the Vision and her mentor to full fighting health and forced Dormammu to surrender by threatening to damp the mystic fires which fed his strength. However, she was unsuccessful in forcing him to to free the Earth Mother--Wanda's occult patronness and, [unlike her brother] a benevolent diety--from his dominion.

After she returned to the mansion, Miss Harkness informed Wanda that her training was over. Although Wanda would never become a sorceress due to her inability to control the higher forces, her knowledge of witchcraft, when combined with her native mutant ability, would still make her an opponent to be reckoned with. She became something never before seen in this world--a "mutant witch". Her training complete, Wanda now felt a new sense of fulfillment and self-awareness. Both she and the Vision, as a result of their recent experiences, were better able to commit themselves to each other, secure in their decision. Wanda's fears that the Vision loved her only because she was the first single woman he'd ever met were banished, as were her concern for what the bulk of humanity would think about their relationship.

Wanda and the Vision were married later that same day in a ceremony presided over by none other than Immortus, Kang the Conquerer's last personna and Lord of Limbo. Since the Vision was never officially declared to be a human being, a legal ceremony was out of the question. Therefore, Wanda and the Vision's marriage

NOW FOR ANOTHER SCENE SHIFT (JUST WHEN WE'VE WHETTED YOUR INTEREST ONCE MORE) THIS TIME TO AVENGERS MANSION, WHERE...
IRON MAN JUST PHONED ME--TO TELL ME I DON'T NEED TO WORRY ANYMORE ABOUT THE LIVING LASER OR THE SERPENT CROWN.
BUT HIS OTHER NEWS--ABOUT MY FATHER, THE WHIZZER--AND HIS HEALTH--
WELL, THERE'S NO CHOICE.
EVEN THOUGH DAD DID DISAPPEAR WITHOUT A WORD--
--EVEN THOUGH I BELIEVE HE DELIBERATELY MISSED MY WEDDING TO THE VISION--
--HE'S STILL THE FLESH OF MY FLESH--
--AND I MUST GO TO HIM.
AS FOR MY OWN TROUBLES--I'LL JUST HAVE TO PUT THEM ASIDE.
BUT AS WANDA STRIDES PURPOSEFULLY INTO THE GARDEN COURTYARD WHICH HALF-CIRCLES THE HOUSE--

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under Immortus was a simple formality--one which has always been respected by their fellow Avengers. After the ceremony they left on an uneventful honeymoon. For reasons Wanda could not fathom, the Vision chose to shorten their honeymoon considerably and return to the life of an Avenger. This piqued Wanda greatly and caused her to wonder why he wished to return so soon. Was it because he didn't want to spend time with her on an intimate basis; was it because, as he claimed, he wanted to discover how the world would react to their marriage? This doubt about the Vision's motives haunted her for some time to come causing her again to ponder the basis of their relationship.

The occurrance of rapid-breaking events after their return to New York gave Wanda little time to reflect upon their quick return. After dealing with Yellowjacket's growth dilemna, they were plunged into a conflict with the wielders of the Serpent Crown, a malignant icon predating ancient Lemuria which had manifestations in many dimensions. It could control its wearer, subverting him-her-it for its own purposes. During one confrontation, the wielder of the crown, Hugh Jones[the head of the Brand Corporation], in an effort to eliminate the Avengers, teleported them to another world--a parallel Earth, replete with its own Serpent Crown. After an initial confrontation with the Squadron Supreme, a superhero team which supported the crown holder of this world, the Avengers came into possession of the crown and escaped with it after giving it to Wanda for safekeeping. As a witch she was best suited to deal with such arcane items. Even though she knew better than to don it, its insidious evil infected her mind. Her fears and hostilities, as well as her desire for independence, surfaced, causing her to first insult and then strike out at her husband when he offered her his aid. She then turned and ran with it back toward the Squadron. The Vision pursued her knowing full well that the Serpent Crown had forced her to act as she did by augmenting her darker side. He followed her until they both encountered members of the Squadron. While the Vision battled with them, Wanda was struggling with the Crown for possession of her soul. When she realized that her husband was in danger she broke the crown's control over her and defeated his final opponent. Her love for the Vision as well as her fear of being controlled, proved to be stronger than the Serpent Crown's power.

The next adventure Wanda faced proved that her training in witchcraft, although beneficial from a personal point of view, could also precipitate its own kind of danger. After their return from the Serpent Crown affair Wanda began to undergo some unsettling personality changes. She became short-tempered, violent--frightened of some outside force which she claimed was attacking her mind, much as the Serpent Crown had. For a second time she insulted and fled from her husband, seeking out Dr. Doom's abandoned castle. Here she met her attacker--a 17th century witch hunter named Cotton Mather, who used some artifact of unknown origin to ensnare her mind by submerging her "good" personna while liberating the side which exulted in power. Cotton Mather defeated Wanda in battle by using the artifact to mesmerize her, but not before she sent out a "mystic messenger" to find help. It returned bearing one very perplexed Spider-Man. Wanda, her mind enthralled by Mather, was forced to attack Spider-Man. At the same time, however, she was able to defy Mather by making her attacks less deadly than he had wanted. Ultimately, after Spider-Man was subdued, Wanda was abducted to 17th century Salem via Doom's time machine. There she was staked out and abused until the timely arrival of Spider-Man and her husband, who had followed Wanda's quinjet. Together they battled the crowd but were soon overcome, with Wanda sustaining a head wound from a firearm. This injury, while diminishing her fighting ability, did little to dampen her determination to aid her husband and Spider-Man in their battle against Cotton Mather's master, the Dark Rider. With her assistance, they were able to defeat the Rider, break Mather's power, and return, a little worse for wear, to their own time.

Things proceeded apace from there. Soon after en-

PIETRO'S GOOD FORTUNE FILLS ME WITH JOY... AND YET, I WONDER...
I AM A MUTANT... AND MY HUSBAND, THE VISION, IS AN ANDROID. COULD WE HAVE A CHILD? DO WE DARE TO TRY?
MORE, DO I TRULY WANT TO? OR DO I THINK I WANT CHILDREN, BECAUSE I FEAR THEY MAY BE DAMNED AS?

Wanda's romance with and later marriage to the Vision, an andriod, presented many problems.

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during a rearrangement of their ranks, the Avengers were stunned by the unexpected, unexplained arrival of a former member--Simon Williams. The former Wonder Man had been "killed" in a battle with the Avengers years earlier. His brainwave patterns had given life to the cybernetic brain of the Vision thus his appearance as a living yet mindless husk proved devastating to the Vision's ego. Wanda, in an attempt to spare her husband further pain, utilized her witchcraft to determine where Wonder Man had been sent from. By attuning herself to nature she was able to trace his point of origin to the Louisiana bayou. Once there she traced the residual energies of the occult conjurations to Black Talon, a voodoo practitioner dedicated to the "Dark God". Wanda's battle with Black Talon nearly ended in her defeat by the Dark God because she doubted her ability to wield her new power against a stronger foe. Finally, her quick wits enabled her to vanquish the foe, but

not before Wanda had come to the painful conclusion that her self-knowledge was incomplete. Her doubts had nearly cost her and her fellow Avengers their lives, and her apparent weakness in the face of occult foes—the Serpent Crown, Cotton Mather, and Black Talon—had to overcome before she could rejoin the ranks of the Avengers.

Providing a test for herself was not difficult. After leaving the Avengers, Wanda recalled that the Serpent Crown from the Squadron's dimension remained unaccounted for. She traced it back to Hugh Jones' ruined headquarters where, in her attempt to test herself in a rematch against the Crown's power, she was ambushed by the Living Laser. Before they could do battle the guards intervened, forcing the Living Laser to flee—with the Crown. Wanda quickly dispatched them, but the wielding of her native power filled her with such trepidation that she fell easy prey to a sniper's bullet. With the last of her strength she flew[one assumes she summoned a wind to carry her] back to the mansion where she collapsed in her husband's arms after delivering her warning.

Wanda's weakened condition prevented her from engaging in the final showdown with the Living Laser but not from being caught up in Attuma's quest for vengeance against the Sub-Mariner. She and the other Avengers, excluding the Beast and Wonder Man, were captured by Attuma's pawn, Tyrak the Treacherous, and turned into collared slaves who were forced to do his bidding. Eventually, the Avengers threw off his yoke and, with the aid of Dr. Doom and the Sub-Mariner, defeated Attuma and his underlings. With the resolution of this problem came another crisis. Wanda's preoccupation with her search for self, coupled with her ambivalence toward her "father", the Whizzer—who had disappeared without a word of explanation and thereby missed Wanda's wedding—and her seeming inability to deal with supernatural foes, had caused her once again to misread her husband's motivations. She failed to realize that the Vision's bitterness and his retreat into a robotic pose were indications of the anguish he was experiencing because of the reappearance of Simon Williams. The Vision feared that since they both shared the same brainwave pattern they were simply manifestations of the same being. When faced with a choice between the "real" Simon Williams and the artificial one, Wanda must choose the man over the machine. After all, hadn't Wanda suggested earlier that he change his name to Simon Williams so that he would have a more human personna? The fear of losing not only his wife but his very IDENTITY to this—USURPER—forced him to withdraw from Wanda and his friends so that he would not be hurt when they rejected him. Wanda was astounded by this sudden change in her formerly-attentive husband and tried to comfort him, only to be rejected. Little did the Vision realize that, although Wanda still loved him, it was his actions which were driving her into Simon Williams company rather than any inclination of her own.

Because of their respective problems, Wanda and Simon sought out each other for support and clarification of this situation. Simon was as confused about his iden-

HAVING BEEN FRAMED BY POWER MAN AND THE ENCHANTRESS, THE ANGRY AVENGERS ARE UNDER ORDERS TO DISBAND, AFTER BEING DECLARED PUBLIC MENACES BY THE CITY COUNCIL...
BUT POWER MAN COULDN'T HAVE PLANNED OUR FRAME-UP BY HIMSELF! WE'VE GOT TO LEARN WHO WAS BEHIND HIM!
WHAT GOOD WILL IT DO? THE MAYOR HAS DECLARED OUR ACTIVITIES ILLEGAL! WE CAN FIGHT AS A TEAM NO LONGER!
IT'S TOO LATE FOR ANY PEP TALKS, ROGERS! THE PARTY'S OVER! WE'RE PAEFTT!

When wanda first joined the Avengers, her choices for a romantic intrest were Captain America and Hawkeye. Cap was too busy and Hawkeye was too brash.

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tity as the Vision was, while Wanda was just plain confused. It didn't help matters any when Simon Williams began to think that, because he and the Vision seemed to have so many traits in common, he must also be in love with Wanda. His attentions towards her were not unnoticed by the Vision, who felt that this justified his own faulty logic. Enraged by this turn of events and his own inability to deal with his anger and jealousy—a new emotion to him—he engaged his rival in a no-holds-barred battle which wore on until both were exhausted. With this final outburst of violent emotion, Wanda realized why her husband had been behaving so irrationally and was finally able to comfort and reassure him. His identity reinforced by his wife's love and belief in him, he was able to come to grips with his human-mechanoid personna. Even the ordeal of the trial held by the Grim Reaper to determine which one was his real brother could not rend the new bond that the previous ordeal had forged between the two. With Wanda's support, he was able to recognize himself as a separate entity with a right to his own life.

The renewal of their love helped Wanda face the disaster-ridden months ahead. Before the Avengers could properly welcome Wonder Man into their ranks, Ultron, an evil mechanoid devoted to the obliteration of mankind, attacked and struck down all the Avengers except Wanda, whom he saved for last. This error nearly cost him his existence. Wanda, tired of being treated like a harmless, helpless woman, bombarded Ultron with a series of probability-altering hexes which caused his electronic systems to overload. She would have destroyed him if not for Cap's timely interference. Ultron, blessed by a lull in the attack, incapacitated both Wanda and Cap, and nearly succeeded in terminating their lives. At a later date, however, Wanda endured torture at his hands and survived to best him with her hex power.

After the defeat of Ultron, the Avengers were again attacked—this time by a super-powered Count Nefaria. His obvious contempt for his opponents incensed the Avengers, especially Wanda. Her pride piqued by his reference to "mutant scum", she confidently wielded her power over the earth-forces against him. [It is interesting to note that she was able to use her hands independently while casting spells, but must otherwise join them when using her mutant hexes.] Even after a temporary setback Wanda's spirit remained undaunted. She was even able to do somehting previously unthought-of—she challenged Iron Man's leadership when she felt that he had endangered the Avengers' teamwork. This was a far cry from the submissive, passive Wanda of years past. Yet, despite her determination and fighting spirit, she and her fellow Avengers suffered defeat at Nefaria's hands during their rematch. What was needed was raw power rather than finesse. What was needed was the power of the Vision. He was revived from the coma induced by Ultron's energy beam in time to enter the battle, but he was not the same Vision who had weathered the trial of the Reaper. He was isolated from his emotions, logical and impassive in the face of his task. Ater the Avengers had staggered Nefaria with their combined attacks, the Vision added the coup-de-grace by dropping in on Nefaria from a height of some several miles, stunning him. Once Nefaria had been dealt with Wanda could once again deal with the task of reawakening her husband's human aspects. This time she was better able to do it since she was under no other pressures and had come to recognize her husband's moods. She knew that the strength of her love would soon restore him to normal.

Just as Wanda seemed to be bringing her life into order an old threat arose wearing a new guise. During a reorganization meeting of the Avengers, Wanda and her brother Pietro—who had rejoined the Avengers against his will—were stricken by a strange malady which tore their souls from their bodies, leaving behind two still forms in a biological stasis. Their souls were imprisoned within two wooden marionettes which were the property of one Django Maximoff, gypsy shaman. He claimed to be Wanda and Pietro's true father, although he knew them as Ana and Mateo, and he had used the Nivashi Stone to steal their souls so that they would never be apart from him again. His dream was thwarted when the Avengers, accompanied by a a vengeful Vision intervened and restored Wanda and Pietro to their bodies by destroying the talisman.

Wanda and Pietro, intrigued by the old man's story, decided to accompany him to the town of Transia in Bulgaria—the place where they had been given to the shaman and his wife. Unbeknownst to them, Wanda's return would set into motion events which would not only imperil Wanda but the safety of all mankind as well.

The first harbinger of doom came disguised in the form of a minor mage named Modred who, in the age of King Arthur, had sought to turn the Darkhold--Chthon's "passport" back into this world—to good rather than evil. The Darkhold proved to be too strong for the well-intentioned Modred. Its power, which Modred had learned how to tap, assaulted Modred and succeeded in overwhelming but not killing him. In order to save his life, Modred's master, a magician named Gervasse, placed an enchantment upon him which enabled him to heal his wounds and survive to battle the Darkhold another day. Modred awakened in the present and was once again pitted against the power of the Darkhold, which was manifested through the Other, Chthon's agent in this world. Although Modred battled the Other to a standstill, he was still part and parcel of the evil of the Darkhold. He became the tool of Chthon, dedicated to his resurection. On their first night in Transia, Modred persuaded Wanda to accompany him to Wundagore alone, since only a magiker would be able to deal with what she would soon face. Actually, he did not want her to have anyone with her who could thwart Chthon's plan. Once he and Wanda reached the site of the citadel where Wanda had been born Modred struck her down and placed her upon the alter of the Darkhold. Her mutant hex freed her from Modred's magical bonds but could not save her from the full, unfettered power of the Darkhold as wielded by a mystic. Wanda was made ready to fulfill her destiny as the vessel for the second coming of the earth-spirit Chthon.

Meanwhile, Pietro, upon discovering his sister's absence, searched the town to no avail. Eventually his

travels brought him to the house of Bova, the cow woman. From Bova he learned of his and his sister's origin. In her presence, he learned of Wanda's possession and of the danger it posed. In desperation he contacted the Avengers who, in their desire to save Wanda from Chthon, responded immediatley--all but the Vision, who was forced to remain behind because of governmental regulations. A titanic struggle ensued, in which the Avengers bested Modred and Chthon bested the Avengers. By this time, Chthon had suppressed Wanda's soul and was in full control of her body's magical powers. Before Chthon could wreak any more havoc the Beast, dressed in the garb of the High Evolutionary's Arthurian New Men, attacked and freed the Avengers from Chthon's power. The Avengers attacked Chthon while, off to the side, Django Maximoff wished his foster daughter's soul out of her body and into the marionette. Once her soul had been freed from Chthon's control, the Avengers ceased their physical assault and joined together to will Wanda's soul back into her body, using the power of their love to overcome Chthon's evil. Finally, Chthon was forced to flee and Wanda, now in full control of her powers and enraged by being used once again, ruthlessly destroyed Chthon's essence, imprisoned within the marionette. After Chthon's demise, Wanda never again suffered from any impairment of her control.

En route to New York, the Avengers detoured to Attilan, the Himilayan home of the Inhumans wherein dwelt Pietro's wife, Crystal. Her sudden revelation that she and Pietro were soon to have a child envoked within Wanda a long-denied conflict. She began to question her priorities, weighing her life as an Avenger and her love for the Vision against her desire for a more normal home life and a family. Even though she knew that the Vision was physically incapable of impregnating her, the issue still loomed. After all, there were...other ways, weren't there? On the other hand, did she really even want children? Would they fit into her present relationship with her husband? Such questions haunted her with such insistence that she was unable to keep her attention on the job at hand. Her overwhelming concern for her husband's well-being jeopardized her safety in the battle with the Grey Gargoyle. She began to realize that because there was a strong possibility that children would either not fit into her lifestyle or would drastically alter her relationship with her husband, her love for her husband was all-important to her, as was his love for her. In an attempt to sort out her feelings, she took a leave of absence so that she could make her decisions based on her own feelings, free from extraneous input.

While on leave at the Jersey coast, Wanda's soul-searching was interrupted by a call from her mentor, Agatha Harkness. It seemed that Wanda's long-time nemesis, the Serpent Crown, had resurfaced in Washington, D.C. It was there that she joined the Thing and another superhero against the wielder of the crown, Hugh Jones who, in the intervening months, had managed to join his crown with the crown of the Squadron Supreme's dimension. With their combined power he had been able to mesmerize and control the minds of all the denizens of Washington, D.C. Using its power, he summoned up the past wielders of the crown and sent them against the trio. Wanda personally engaged Jones and the crown, desiring to prove her competence in battle against a supernatural foe. During the stalemate which followed, Wanda came to understand why she had succumbed to it on the Squadron's world. The crown's power stemmed, not from the crown or its wielder, but from the Serpent God Set. She realized that her weakness before the crown, Black Talon, and Cotton Mather were not the result of any weakness within her but were due, instead, to the fact that she was battling the tool of a being far more powerful than either she or its agent was. It was no disgrace to lose a battle to a god when one is a mere mortal. However, this was of little comfort when she realized that, little by little, she was being defeated by the Serpent God. She knew that the penalty for defeat was loss of her soul to the god but, when she sensed that the Thing was attempting to remove the crown from Jones' head and render it harmless, she sacrificed herself to Set in order to provide a diversion. The Thing removed the crown before Wanda's soul was consumed saving her from any taint of its evil.

Wanda returned to her beachhouse to continue her

MY LOVE, THIS ONE FEELS PAIN WITHIN YOU. YOU SPOKE OF A WOUND...*
ONE FACET OF BEING THE SWORDSMAN IS LIVING WITH NICKS AND CUTS.
I DON'T LIKE THE WAY WANDA BLEW HER TOP IN L.A.** I HOPE SHE'S NOT STILL ON HER "ANTI-HUMAN" KICK.
REALLY, I JUST FEEL A LITTLE WEAK.
LISTEN, VISION, ANYONE CAN FREEZE IN A MOMENT OF DANGER!***
EH? YON VENT--!
...AND THAT LEADS TO TROUBLE!

For a short time (thankfully), Wanda went through an "anythink human stinks" stage.

© 1982 Marvel Comics

I WOULD HAVE EXPECTED AT LEAST YOU TO KEEP YOUR MIND ALERT, THOR! BUT YOU'RE NO BETTER THAN A HUMAN!
WANDA! THAT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE YOU!

musings. Over the past several days, several things had become clear to her. Her brush with death had driven home to her exactly how dangerous and unpredictable her life as an Avenger was. How could she raise a child who could be orphaned at any time? More than that, she realized that a child might divide her attentions, making her an unreliable Avenger and depriving the Vision of some much-needed love and support. She also realized how important he was to her. She would not sacrifice their love in order to fulfill some half-desired ideal. By the time Ms. Marvel arrived to talk with her, Wanda's mind was already made up. Although she still wanted a child, her life with the Vision and her career as an Avenger was more important to her --now. The future would take care of itself.

Wanda's newfound resolve was tested by the sudden, abnormal pregnancy of Ms. Marvel. Wanda had worked out her feelings and reached a decision concerning motherhood, but Ms. Marvel was taken totally offguard. Confused and unable to cope with this startling change in her life, she turned to Wanda for support and strength, receiving both in abundance. When the child was born three days later Wanda was fascinated by it but experienced no maternal pangs. By taking charge of her life and making her own decisions based on her own priorities Wanda found within herself a new sense of peace and fulfillment. Her marriage to the Vision satisfied her need for love and support as a woman while her role as the Scarlet Witch allowed her to realize her full potential as a person.

Wanda's new sense of confidence and well-being served her in good stead from that point on. When the threat of Ultron's return loomed, Wanda was serene and unafraid, despite the fact that she was the focus of his wrath. She was confident of her ability to destroy Ultron as she had before. She even suggested that the Avengers take the battle to Ultron rathter than waiting for him to take the initiative. Unfortunately, Wanda was incapacitated, abducted, and nearly killed by Ultron when an enthralled Iron Man betrayed her to her enemy. Only the timely recovery of Iron Man and the Wasp saved her from this fate.

Her spirits undampened by her brush with death she continued to be a valuable asset to the Avengers. During the quest for the Resurrection Stone, Wanda's quick wits and dramatic use of her powers enabled her and her companions to procure the first half of the stone. Her compassion and understanding helped the Beast to deal with a painful situation. When the Weathermen struck her power over the forces of nature eliminated two Weathermen-controlled tornados, and, ultimately aided the Vision in subduing their opponent.

She was also in the forefront of the movement to reorganize the Avengers. The fact that one of their number had been overlooked in the Weathermen affair proved that the Avengers could no longer function efficiently. It was finally decided that the Avengers should be pared down to a core group of six. Although Wanda and the Vision had no desire to leave, they realized that they could be among those eliminated. The prospect of losing the only true home she had ever known frightened Wanda as no threat, no villian, ever could. Never before had she been faced with the challenge of making a life for herself outside the walls of Avengers' Mansion. The fact that the Vision would be with her was of some personal comfort, but she knew that life outside would be even more difficult for him than it would be for her. Her brother had found a place outside for himself, but he dwelt among the Inhumans, who possessed powers as uncanny as his own. In her fear and depression, she turned to her husband for support and comfort as she had done so many times before. His love helped her recover her strength and resolve. When the Avengers faced Moondragon during their recent reorganizational meeting Wanda realized that Moondragon's accusations contained some truth. Perhaps she and Vision had remained so long with the Avengers because of habit or because they were afraid of facing possible failure in the outside world. Because of the unique bond of love and support between them they decided to try making a life for themselves among "normal" people. Perhaps their decision was influenced by Moondragon's mind-power, but, whatever the reason, theirs will not be an easy--or a dull--life.

The saga of the Scarlet Witch is far from ended.

(After many years as a character, the Scarlet Witch, along with her husband, the Vision, has now received her own book, albeit a miniseries. This article was written prior to the creation and publication of this series. THE EDITOR)

Character © 1982 Marvel Comics

SPANKY

by Mark Marderosian

(c) 1982 Mark Marderosian

IN A TIME TO COME, DURING ONE STARRY NIGHT, THRONGS OF ANXIOUS PEOPLE ARRIVE FOR A COLLECTIVE DREAM...

HURRY! IT'S ALMOST STARTING!

HERE'S A SPACE

YAY! HERE COME THE SCREENS!

YAY!

YIPPIE!

YAY!

IT'S NORMA DEAN!

WELL SPANKY, NOW WE'LL HAVE SEEN THIS MOVIE FIVE TIMES!

WHO'S COUNTING?

MEANWHILE...

WHITE HOUSE

PUT ME THROUGH TO THE PRESIDENT

CIA

SOON...

SORRY FOR THE LATE MEETING BUT I JUST RECEIVED CHILLING NEWS...

HOLOGRAM PICTURE STAR, NORMA DEAN, HAS BEEN KIDNAPPED!

PRESIDENT

NO!

WHAT?! ARE YOU SURE THAT

WHEN DID WE FIND OUT?!

I CAN NOT BELIEV

I'M AFRAID OUR INFORMATION IS CORRECT...SHE WAS TAKEN BY KENT MOOCLES, A FIVE-YEAR-OLD GENIUS. SWITCH ON THE MINI-HOLOGRAM!

WE'VE LEARNED HE'S TAKEN HER TO THE ENCHANTED WOODS!

OH GREAT! A TWENTY MILE RADIUS OF ENCHANTED HELL!

SHE'S AS GOOD AS DEAD!

NO! ONE MAN MIGHT BE ABLE TO GET HER OUT ALIVE! ONE MAN...OR MORE PRECISELY, ONE BUNNY!

HEY! DOWN IN FRONT!

SPANKY, PLEASE COME WITH ME!

AW! RIGHT AT A GOOD PART!

LATER

THAT'S OUR SITUATION, SPANKY. NORMA DEAN IS WORSHIPPED AND LOVED BY 50 BILLION PEOPLE ON THIS PLANET!

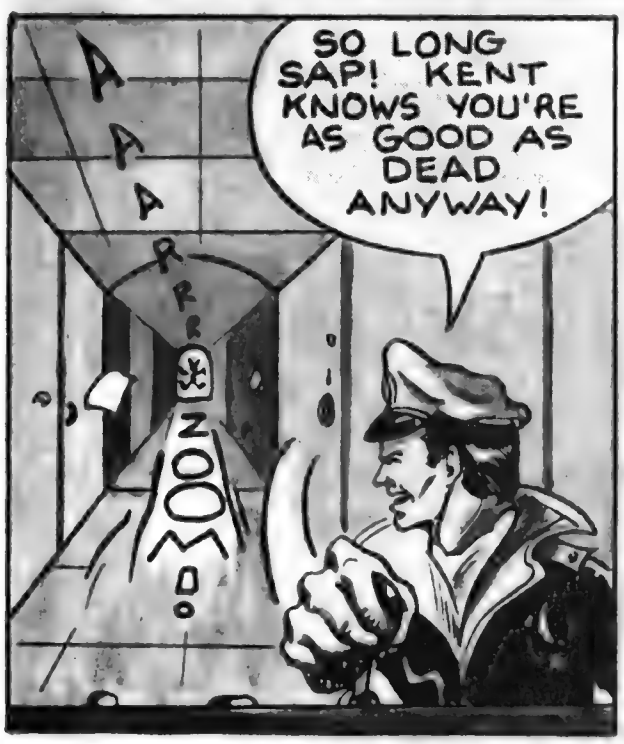
HER POWER IS BEYOND REASON!

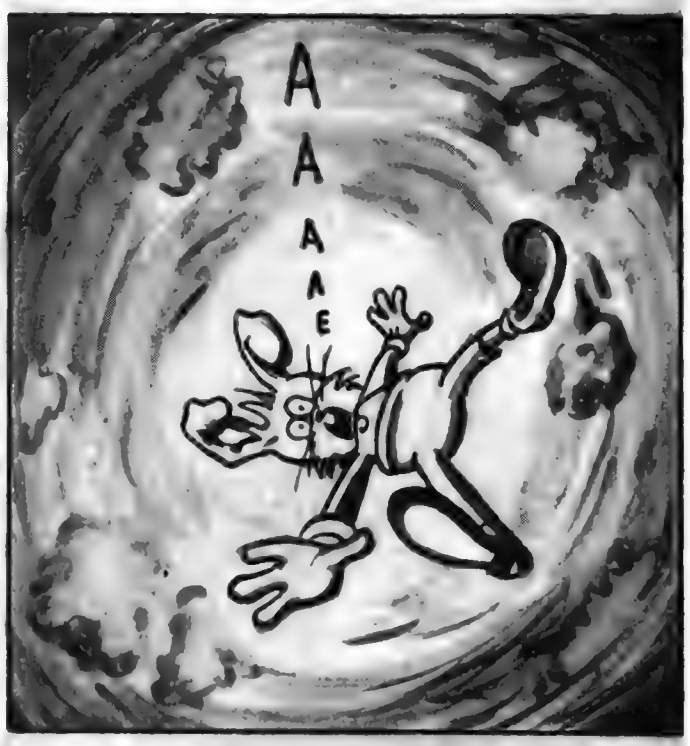
IF WORD GETS OUT BEFORE AN ATTEMPTED RESCUE, THE WORLD WILL BE IN CHAOS! TIME IS A FACTOR!

THE ECONOMIC ANGLE ALONE IS STAGGERING!

I ACCEPT THE CASE SIR! YOU CAN COUNT ON ME!

SOON
WHEN DO WE LAND, PILOT?
WE DON'T. I'M NOT STUPID ENOUGH TO LAND IN THE ENCHANTED WOODS!


AAAA
SO LONG SAP! KENT KNOWS YOU'RE AS GOOD AS DEAD ANYWAY!
ZOOM


AAAAE

THUMP!

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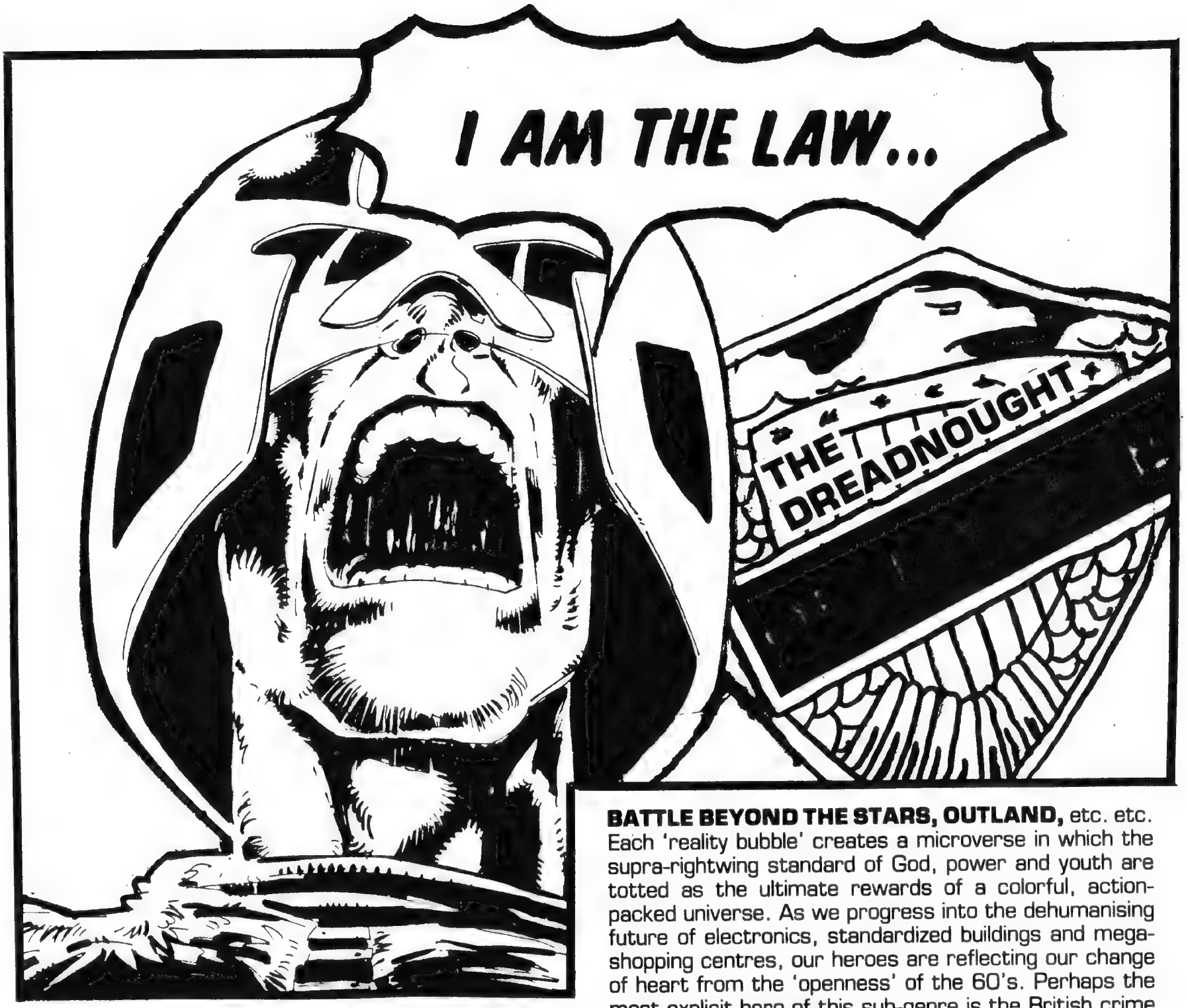


By BRIAN M. CLARKE

With the world in,the grip of a recession it should not come as a suprise to find that the new folk heroes adopted by the media are becoming more and more right-wing than ever. **Star Wars** presented a war between Imperialist and Royalist armies of which over 100,000,000 people world-wide rooted for the autocratic 'Might is Right' philosophy of Leia and her cohorts.

BUCK ROGERS placed the military firmly in space and gave popular spoort to the role of the adventuring soldier. Barking orders that MUST be obeyed Buck fights against the alien oppressors who would try to take away our individuality.

FLASH GORDON takes muscle to the stars and uses masses of brawn to red-neck his way through a stable society bringing death, slaughter and destruction to a planet much more peaceful than that of his home-world.

And the list can be extended; **SPACE: 1999, STAR TREK, BATTLESTAR GALACTICA, STARCRASH, BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS, OUTLAND,** etc. etc. Each 'reality bubble' creates a microverse in which the supra-rightwing standard of God, power and youth are totted as the ultimate rewards of a colorful, action-packed universe. As we progress into the dehumanising future of electronics, standardized buildings and mega-shopping centres, our heroes are reflecting our change of heart from the 'openness' of the 60's. Perhaps the most explicit hero of this sub-genre is the British crime crusader **JUDGE DREDD.**

IN THE BEGINNING

Judge Dredd made his first appearance in the children's comic book 2000 AD, in issue 2 [Mar. 1977], a comic inspired by the tremendous interest in SF created by the George Lucas war-flick.

The publishers, IPC MAGAZINES, had identified a segment of the teen-age comic buying market that seemed right for a science fiction book and assigned vetran launch-man PAT MILLS to formulate the overall comic. Mills had worked on various comics before 2000 AD, but none of them had carried very much SF material. Working with script writer JOHN WAGNER many ideas were tossed around the office. Mills suggested an occult type hero, but after discussing the format in detail it was decided to drop the character, feeling that occult and SF elements wouldn't balance in the same comic.

Wagner mentioned that he had been working for sometime on the idea of a super-rightwing policeman who would act as judge, jury and [occassionally]

executioner. Mills liked the idea, and it was decided to give the character the name of the Mill's occult hero; **JUDGE DREDD.**

The original concept of the Dredd strip was that it was not set too far in the future and would involve fairly 'normal' crimes. It would be placed in a New York type city in which crooks were dealt with by a highly trained group of police officers called Judges. It was to be a basic action strip with slight SF effects thrown in. Pleased with the idea they assigned free-lance artist Ezquerra to visualize the concept.

A CHANGE OF PACE

Ezquerra handed in a few pages of roughts; and changed the entire concept of the strip. Almost hidden in the backgrounds was a wealth of futuristic detail. Tall, Moebius type, spires reached up into the sky. Ribbons of highway twisted up and around the towers, carrying traffic to all parts of the gigantic city.

A story conference was called and the setting changed from the near-future, to the not so near-future; 2099. The judge concept was fleshed out, adding an Atomic War [started by the last President of the USA - ROBERT L. BOOTH]. When the war ended the few survivors voted for a new law system. Above ALL else society must remain stable. No matter what the cost in human lives, or living standards, the law must be seen to be both strong and capable of controlling the masses huddled inside the protective shell of the city. To begin with they retained the police force much as it was and added the specialised Judges. Eventually the Judges proved so capable that the police were no longer required and they were disbanded.

The overall concept was finally agreed. The stories were written, the artwork submitted, and the great gamble taken; would the kids like it?

In one word, YES. Dressed in his blue and green leather suit, wearing an Eagle shoulder pad [the symbol of fully trained Judge, cadets wear a half-eagle], large linked chain and battle helmet, Judge Dredd rode his superpowered bike THE LAWMASTER into the hearts of thousands of children.

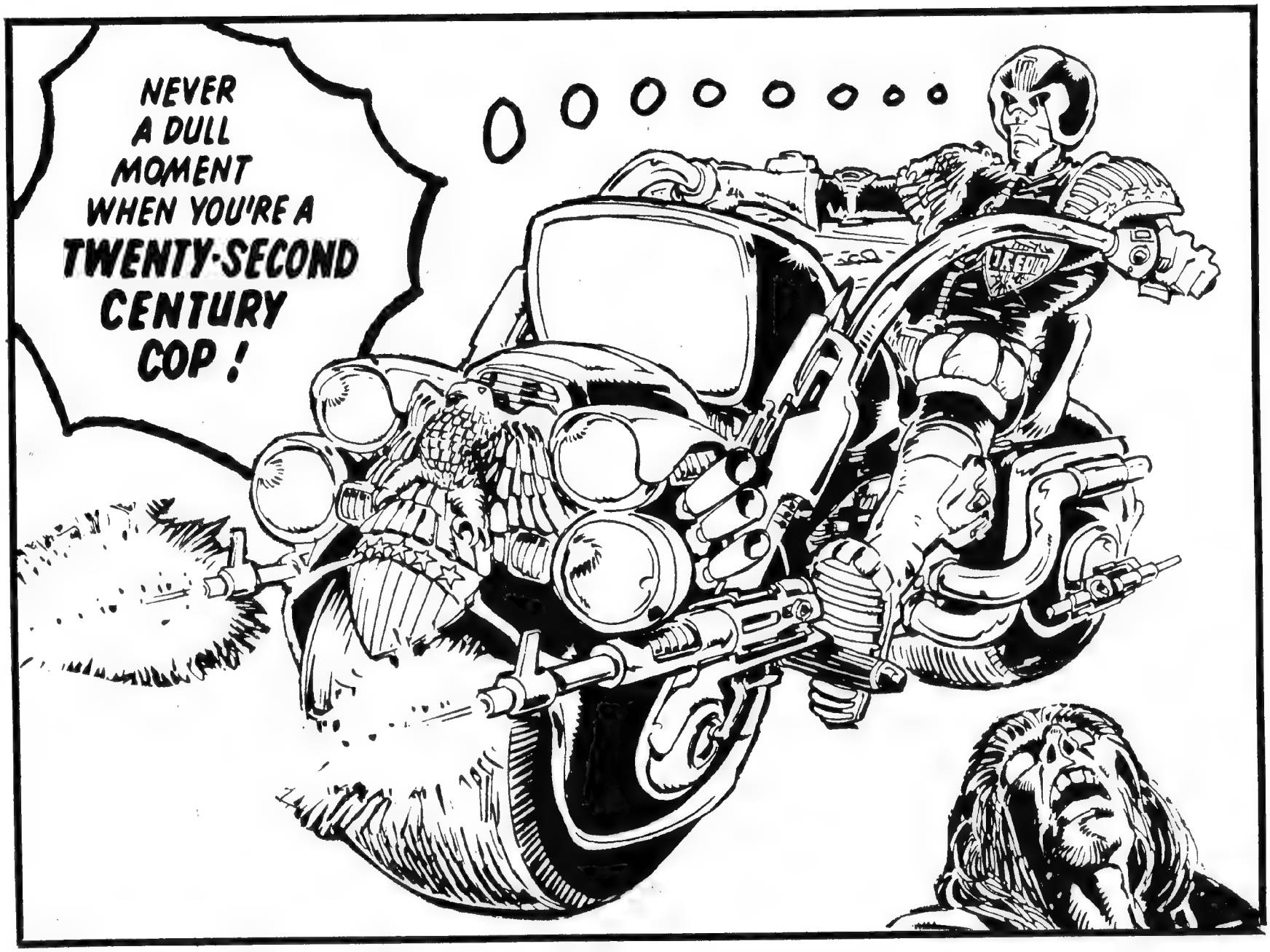
Within weeks he was one of the most popular comic book characters in England. A kind of 'Dredd-Mania' began to sweep the country. Slow at first, but as the adventures revealed more and more about this strange character his popularity grew. At the end of his epic adventure ROBOT WARS [lasting nine issues] he was a comic book house-hold name. There was even a Judge Dredd fan-club.

Over the next few months the back-ground of the strip came alive. We learned how the Judges were part of a world wide system [including the Moon] who patroled gigantic city states called MEGA-CITIES. Judge Dredd was a graduate of the first year training class and worked, mainly, in Mega-City one.

After the Atomic War the DECLARATION OF JUDGEMENT created a real police state in which the former President was sentenced to 100 years in suspended animation for his crime of starting World War Three. The citizens voted a group of people to form the GRAND COUNCIL OF JUDGES with the mandate of making the cities, and hense the world, safe.

Right from the start the strip was filled with weird background and incidental characters. The Atomic War

AS DREDD AND SPIKES DROVE BACK TO THE WAITING LAND-RAIDER...
YOU KNOW, JUDGEY— THE REASON I DELAYED RESCUING YOU WAS 'COS I WAS LOOKING ROUND DELIVERANCE... CAME ACROSS A COUPLE OF INTERESTING ITEMS.
GENUINE WORLD WAR TWO HAND GRENADES AND A COLT SIX SHOOTER. HOW D'YOU LIKE ME ? D'YOU THINK I LOOK CUTE...LIKE ONE OF DEM TWENTIETH CENTURY PUNK ROCKERS ?
WHEN WE GET INSIDE, I'LL SHOW YOU...
I CAN HARDLY WAIT !
YOU—ER—LOOK WONDERFUL, SPIKES !



had ruptured the face of the Earth creating a 'no-go' atomic hell; the Cursed Earth. It was here that radiation twisted the genes of once normal animals and people into inhuman monsters. Technology had raced ahead in it's need to create and control a new social order. Clones are as common as robots, and even Judge Dredd had a clone (which admitantly turned out to be evil). The clone was known as RICO DREDD, and even managed to sire a child before its insanity left Dredd no option but to destroy it. Rico left behind a daughter, Vienna, but she can never be anything more than just another citizen to him. Involvement leads to compassion, and compassion leads to commitment, and a Mega-City Judge can have only one commitment in his life.

THE OTHER STARS

The city itself became a star of the strip, taking on it's own personality. Large CON-APTS (blocks of flats housing over 60,000 people at any one time) contained the ever growing population. Named after media stars such as CHARLES BRONSON, UNA STUBBS and WILL EISNER, it was possible for the inhabitants to live out their entire life without ever having to leave the block. Each block was a self-contained unit, housing emergency services, entertainment and information rooms.

The city is heated by using the heat generated from the molten core of the Earth and piping it around the CON-APTS. The whole city is protected from the radiation (and other evils) by a plasti-glass dome, equipped with scanners and lazers to detect and eliminate danger. To help Dredd control the thousands of potential criminals he uses the services of a 'super-grass', the ultra cool MAX NORMAL. As Dredd's personal informer Normal is perhaps one of the safest persons in the city - unless he breaks the law. Dredd upholds the letter of the law no matter what is at stake.

JUDGE DREDD THE COMIC STRIP

Although the form dicates that his adventures are episodal, Dredd has been involved in a number of epic adventures lasting up to 26 installments at a time (Dredd is allocated four or five pages of comic per week). The CURSED EARTH, ROBOT WARS and JUDGE CHILD sagas all developed a better defined direction for the strip, introducing new characters and situations into what could quite easily become a formulated narrative.

Along his way Dredd has encountered many threats based on current media trends gone wild. Among others he has fought the TATE AND LYLE sugar cube, the Jolly Green Giant, and utra-punks. He has brought to justice

the Body Sharks who lent money using the body of a loved one as collateral [if you default they send your loved one's body to the Body Bank].

Dredd was caught inbetween the two sides involved in the BURGER WARS in which **MACDONALDS** fought **BURGER KING** for the domination of part of the Cursed Earth. Later he came to Las Vegas in which the Mafia had taken complete control and to **not** gamble was illegal. Dinosaurs have been brought back to life by genetic engineering. There has even been a super-graffiti artist, SMILEY, who met his end whilst trying to create popular art on the walls of the blank and soul-less city blocks.

Dredd seems to have no MORAL respect for the laws he enforces and apparently carries out his duty because of his training rather than for any ethical reasoning. Once, when framed for a crime, he was sent to a penal colony on Titan. Escaping, Dredd threatened the lives of innocent bystanders and even took control of the cars in an effort to prove himself innocent. It is interesting to speculate if Dredd would ever allow one of his prisoners the same chance. Dredd can never bring himself to admit that the law CAN make a mistake, unless he is the victim.

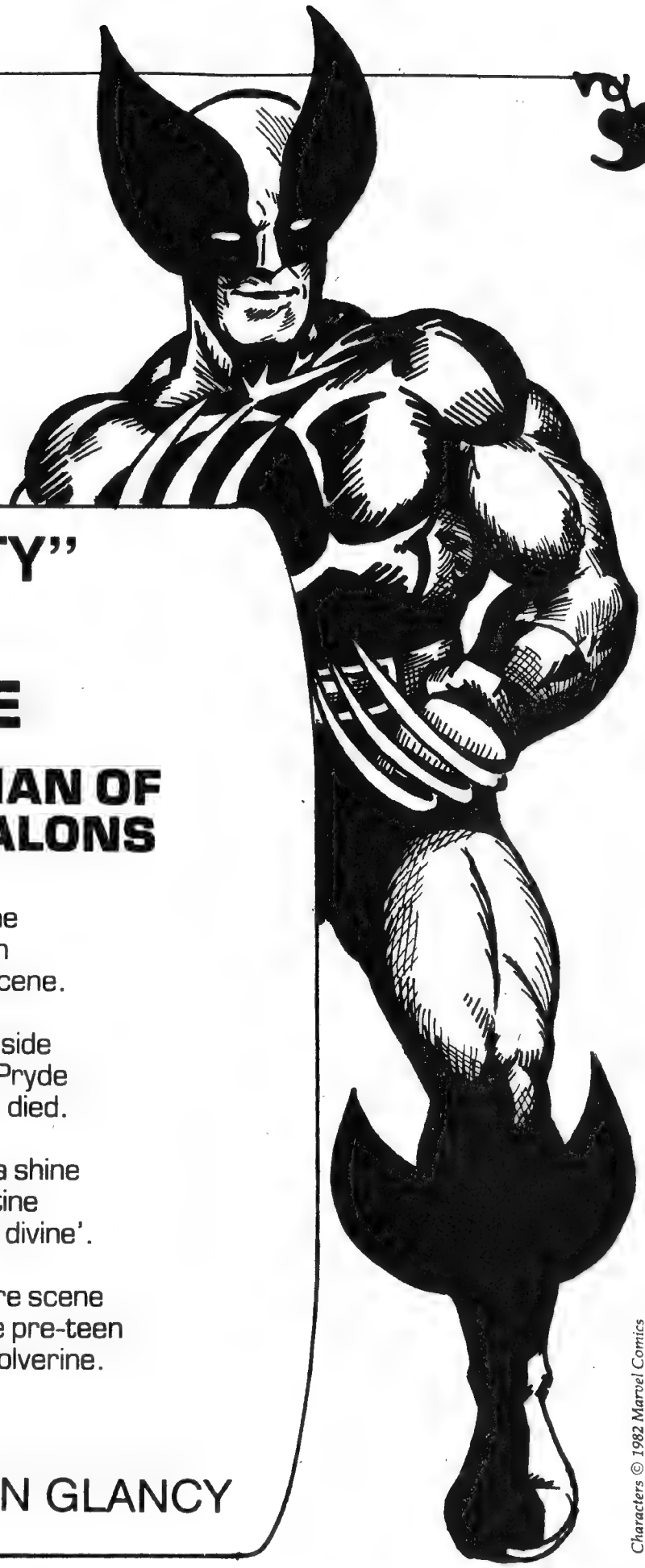
Along with his two 'helpers' WALTER THE WOBOT [sic] and a hairy Kangaroo type creature called simply TWEAK, Dredd has done much for the citizens of Mega-City one. So much so that he was at one timed voted CHIEF JUDGE, but rather than take up the office that would allow him to take direct control of the laws of the city [and perhaps do the most 'good'], he would rather stay on the streets in a self-fulfilling death-wish. Somehow one cannot imagine Dredd sat behind a desk, and the violence of his world may well see that it never works out that way.

A few Judges go insane due to the social pressures of the job [Judge Cal for instance wanted to create a new world order based on that of the Roman Empire.], and most of the Judges lose contact with the 'real' world. Dredd is simply Uncle Joe to Vienna, but Joe Dredd died a long, long time ago.

The world of Judge Dredd has entered the 22nd century. Currently he is in the year 2103. It is a time of electronic controls, genetic engineering and overpopulation. Many of the people cannot find space to live in the city blocks and live in caravans that continually drive along the crowded highways.

It is a brutal, savage, inhuman era, and it demands of it's law enforcement agency the same harsh reply.

In this world Judge Dredd stands ready, gun in hand, to keep the peace. At any price!



"KATHOLOCITY"

ODE

TO THE MAN OF MANY TALONS

I do not love the Wolverine
I do not love his surly mien
I find his nature quite obscene.

Yet if he sank his claws inside
The inner works of Kitty Pryde
Until the ghastly brat had died.

Then to him I would take a shine
And cry 'Oh be my Valentine
Dear Wolvie of the claws divine'.

Aye, Logan - if in the future scene
You slew the disneyesque pre-teen
How much I'd love the Wolverine.

KATHLEEN GLANCY

Characters © 1982 Marvel Comics

FANDOM SPOTLIGHT ON FIRST COMICS, INC.

Talking with Mike Gold

By Don and Maggie Thompson

LOC: Would you summarize the beginning of First Comics, Inc.?

Gold: [Laughs] I really want to take it all the way back to 1971, when Warp opened, but that would be totally irrelevant. That's when the play opened here in Chicago. It opened the day after **Grease,** which opened in Chicago, closed, and went to Broadway. **Warp** was revived here in Chicago after playing a number of other cities back in 1979 - by the Organic Theater Company, which started **Warp** to begin with. The Organic was the original home of **Warp.**

By this time, Rick Obadiah was on the staff of the **Organic** as their business manager and as the producer of the play. When it moved [in 1981] to a much larger theatre in Chicago, Rick and I started working together a little bit to promote **Warp**. Among many other things, we held a performance of **Warp II** [which by far is the most exciting of the [**WARP TRILOGY**]] for all the comics professionals who attended the 1980 Chicago ComicCon, That was an awful lot of fun, doing that, because we had about forty guests at the ComiCon that year. **Frank Brunner** was one of them, coincidentally.

Shortly after that, as Rick and I had fully anticipated, we started hearing from **Marvel** and **DC** indicating interest. They were interested in doing the book. Rick, in his role now as general partner to **Dramatic License** [which is the holding company for **Warp**], was negotiating with them, but Rick's background is in Hollywood and in theatre and ancillary rights there in, and he was fairly dissatisfied with what was going on there.

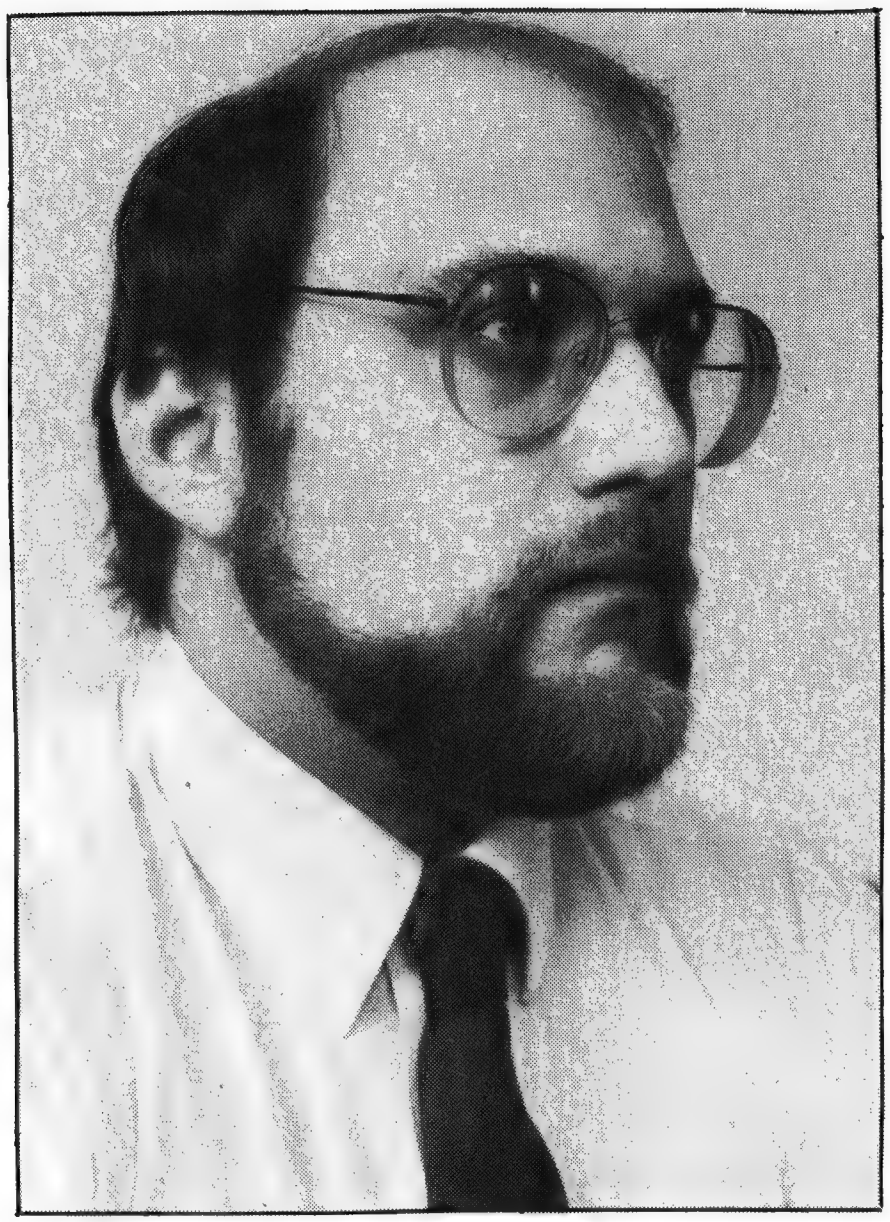
The Executive Staff(Left to Right): Rick Filber, Mike Gold, Rick Oliver, Joe Staton, and Rick Obadiah

He just didn't think he'd gotten an offer that was reasonable, and I was serving to advise him of what the comics industry was all about. Mind you, Rick had other advice, as well; mine was not the only - but mine was the primary - advice.

I explained to them one day, "Look - we can do this on our own. This is what it would take to do it; we can publish it on our own." Mind you, we were just talking about doing **Warp** and maybe **Warp**-related spinoffs at that time. So Rick thought that that was sort of interesting, and he continued negotiating with **DC** and **Marvel,** but as that process went on he came back to me and said, "Well, let's talk about this some more." We talked about it some more, and he brought in Rick Felber [who is a friend and co-worker of his]. Rick [with his business background] said, "Well, yeah, this is fine, but if you're going to gear up to do this, you might as well just go into the comics publishing business, because, if **Warp** is going to sell, other things are going to sell as well. And you've already gone through the efforts of putting together a staff, offices, production department, and that sort of thing."

So the three of us sat down and started to do a whole five-year plan for the organization, and at that point we targeted eight titles [which has since been expanded to nine], just in terms of our budgeting for that five-year plan. And, as we were talking with people and as we were putting our business together, it became very, very clear that what we were really in was the business of producing comic books, not the business of promoting **Warp,** per se. "We," being our corporation, bid on the rights for **Warp** - which put Rick in something of a difficult position, but that was legally handled by a battery of lawyers in both Chicago and New York - and, in point of fact, Rick was not involved with the negotiations between **First Comics** and Dramatic License.

So that all **Warp** became was one of our first properties. As we went further down the road, I picked Joe Staton as our art director; he was my first choice. Joe and I has worked on **Weird Organic Tales,** which was a 16-page promotion comic for the Organic Theather - which printed a quarter million copies over at World Color. Which has a panel about **Warp,** by the way, so I suspect that book's going to be worth a lot of money, if



Mike Gold
President and Managing Editor

Warp takes off.

LOC: Did you stockpile copies?

Gold: I have a few. [Laughs] I have a few. Organic does, too, which'll be nice. They're not for profit, so it'll be real nice for them. They're a damn creative group of people.

LOC: Who did the art and script on that?

Gold: I plotted it; Joe drew it. And Paul Kupperberg dialogued it. It was a lot of fun. It was a theatrical subscription device, but we recognized the fact that only a certain number of people were going to subscribe from that. The real trick was to promote a very innovative theatre company to a group of people that would be interested in the product but who do not generally go to see theatre.

The next play that the Organic did was **Doctor Rat,** the William Kotzwinkle book, and that's the type of thing that the Organic does. Things like **Warp** and **Doctor Rat.**

LOC: How financially successful is the Organic Theatre Company?

Gold: They've been around for twelve years - thirteen, fourteen years, now. They're not for profit. Nobody makes any money off it, because it's not for profit. Today, if you're a theatre group and you're still in business when you can't get funding from any governmental agency anymore and whatever funding you can get from the foundation world is very tight because everybody is there - if you're still in business, you're doing pretty good.

The Organic has toured internationally for years and years. They've had a couple of very, very stunningly successful plays. They were the original home for **Bleacher Bums,** which later wound up on **PBS**, and there's a **Bleacher Bums** production on the West Coast that's been running for about fourteen or fifteen months. They played Broadway; they played Off-Broadway. It's a filthy successful place. They're real innovative.

LOC: Which **First Comics** titles will come out in which sequence?

Gold: Warp #1 will hit the stands on or by November 16. **Warp #2** and **E-Man #1** will come out on or by December 14. **Warp #3** and **E-Man #2** will come out on or by January 11. There's some fine-tuning involved here, once we get past the first of the year, but basically we're talking about the middle of these months. **Sable #1** will come out by February whatever [8th or something].

LOC: How well do you expect to stay on that schedule? It's one thing to announce a schedule - another to produce an artistic creation on time, as some other companies have found.

Gold: We have taken every safeguard in the book. One of the reasons why we can be a little more optimistic about making the schedule that we have is that we have taken a tremendous amount of lead time; we'll be using that lead time effectively.

In terms of the renumeration we offer our talent, I think they're a little less likely to feel the need to drop something for a short period of time in order to go and do something that will take a week out of their schedule to make them a few thousand dollars. There's less of that need on their part.

We've also built in other safeguards down the line. For example, as we're casting the **Warp** book [this is something we haven't mentioned publicly before], we're adapting the **Warp** play as it was written, although making some minor changes along the way, so it sets up stuff for the future. The **Warp** play was really three plays: Warp I, Warp II, and Warp III. Each of those plays will be taking up about three issues of our book. And when we are done, for example, with Warp I, we are going to be skipping a month - not on our schedule, but in terms of the **Warp** comic - and running a **Warp Special** which will at that point serve as a jumping-off point, so that we can go into another aspect of the **Warp** universe. Frank won't be doing that. Between II and III we will be doing the same thing; we will be doing **Warp Special #2**. There'll be a **Warp** book out every month, but now here's two months where, if Frank needs the extra time, he'll have it.

LOC: Who will be handling the fill-in book?

Gold: We don't have anything assigned yet, although we do have the assignment out. Which is my cryptic way

of saying we haven't announced it yet.

Our plan for the **E-Man** book is that every month we will have a brand-new story, drawn by Joe Staton. The writer we're not announcing for another week yet, I'm sorry to say. We may should demand dictate, reprint the original stories, which consist of ten issues of **E-Man,** the one **Charlton Bullseye #4**, and the five or six "Mike Mauser" stories. But we'll do that in some sort of trade paperback format - again, if our readers demand that of us, we're certainly amenable to it. We have the negatives.

LOC: What happens to Nick Cuti with regard to his rights as co-creator of **E-Man**? It seems to us he's entitled to an equal control of his character and an equal cut of the pie as Joe Staton's.

Gold: I absolutely agree with you. Categorically, right down the line, I agree with you. There's no question of that. And what we announced in [our news] release is absolutely accurate, as well. Our policy at **First Comics** is not to announce anything publicly unless it's cast in iron. We're just not goint to say we hope to get somebody to do something.

Nick is co-creator, but you have to understand Nick's position: He's on staff at **DC Comics** as Len Wein's assistant editor, and **DC** has been telling some people that they frown on their staff people doing any work for us and, presumably, for **Marvel Comics** - although Nick has been doing some writing for **Whitman** and for **Warren.** That puts Nick in a real tough position. Does Nick want to risk losing his job in order to write **E-Man?** It's my impression that Nick wants to write **E-Man** desperately, having a tremendous amount of fondness for the character which he certainly deserves, as he did beautiful work on the book.

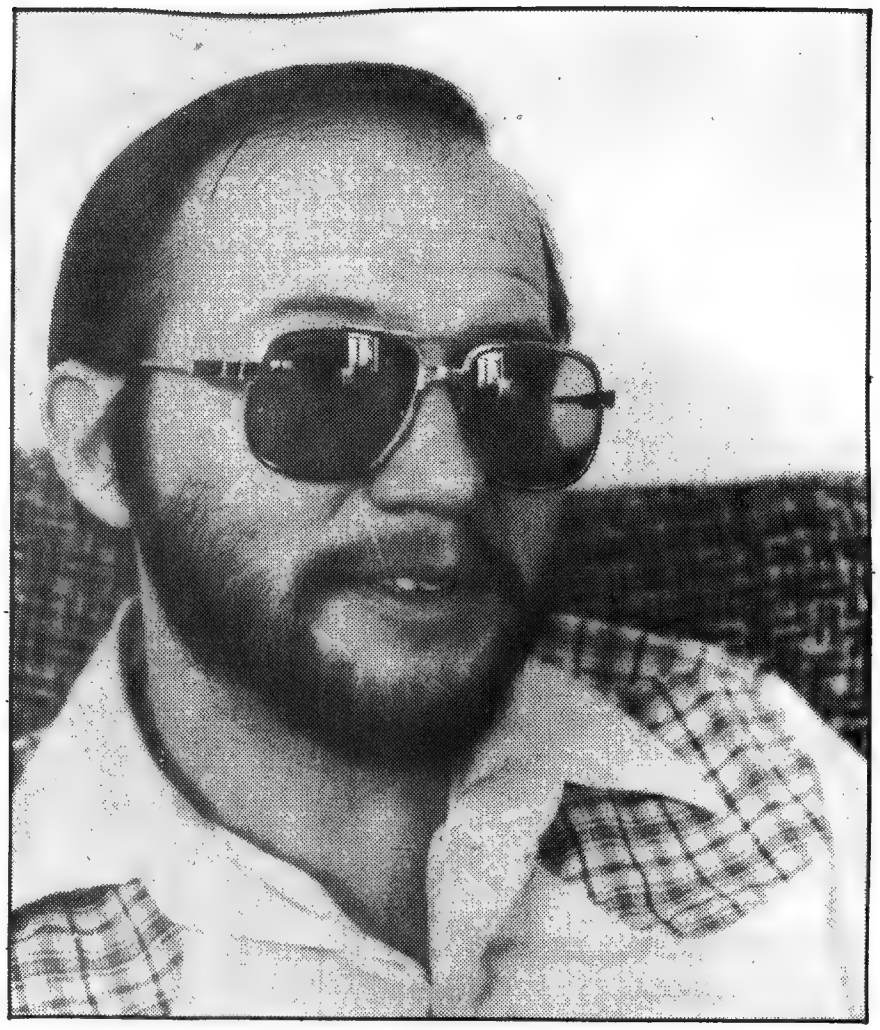
I can only tell you for the record right now two things: #1 - The first person we offered the writing assignment to was Nick. #2 - The writer of the **E-Man** book will be announced at the San Diego ComiCon.

LOC: What happens to the rights of the writer who scripts the later, non-Cuti, **E-Man** stories, if it comes time to sell the character to, say, Saturday morning TV?

Gold: That's a very legitimate question. As a matter of fact, I'm really enjoying this interview - really challenging questions. I've been sitting back, waiting for somebody to ask.

The situation with respect to those types of situations is as follows: The characters and the relationships of those characters and the concepts that originally exist in **E-Man** that were created by Nick and Joe are recognized as just that; they were created by these two individuals. Anybody else who may come in and work in any capacity and create something else has creator's rights over those things, over those aspects.

If that individual can exist solely on the outside of **E-Man** - for example, let's go to the **Howard the Duck** syndrome; that's the best example of something like this: You know, if you have a little two-page thing where you create the sort of thing you never realize is going to go anywhere, six months later you find that you have 62,000 pieces of mail saying, "Bring back **Howard the Duck!"** - You know, you decide to go off and do **Howard the Duck**, and that will automatically deed the creation to the owner. It will be the property of the people or person who created that concept. And we will have a defacto right of first and last refusal on that. It we want to pass on it entirely, and the creator wants to go and sell it to **Marvel Comics** or what have you, there is that possibility. [We'd then have the right to top **Marvel's** offer,] but we can't underbid them.



Joe Staton
Art Director

I don't want this to sound like a cop-out, but it is a complicated situation, and it is in our contracts. The same thing is true with **Warp.** Frank didn't create **Warp,** although he will be bringing stuff - particularly once we get past the adaptation - to **Warp.** Nobody knows the **Howard the Duck** situation, other than Gerber, better than Frank. He was there at the beginning, once it spun off. And we've been protecting our talent in those types of situations. We're protecting ourselves, too - in that if, for example, we have created a new superhero in **E-Man #3** and later on we are going to be reprinting **E-Man #3,** we still have the right to do that. We don't have to take out that character. When we do reprint it we do owe our talent considerable reprint royalties. We pay royalties on all reprinting, foreign and domestic.

LOC: Are you setting a limit on the number of titles you plan to be publishing eventually?

Gold: No, we're not. We have seven titles which are in the works right now, and we're in negotiations for two more, so we're certainly planing nine. We have no plans to stop.

LOC: Are you going to the top people in the field or are you an open market?

Gold: A combination of the two. We're interested in developing new talent. We're doing that on a regional basis at first by contacting schools in the Chicago area. What we're going to be doing at the beginning of the new school year is working with Chicago area schools. That does not mean that we will not be looking at talent outside of the Chicago area, but we are doing sort of a civic pride type of thing. That includes production talent as well - letterers, colorists, paste-up artists...

In terms of new talent, we are anxious to be working with new talent. Obviously, for our first several books we have everything all tied up. But in the long run, most of our books, I think, will be done by recognizable talent. That doesn't mean that we're not interested in working with new talent; we do have back-up features. And there's an awful lot of people who break on the scene who are fully realized talents or who only need a little bit of work - people you never heard of a year ago. And we're already working with a couple of people like that, and we have big hopes for them. They're names that wouldn't be recognizable to anybody right now.

LOC: If an unknown with potential came to you, you would have him do a back-up feature and work his way up?

Gold: Generally speaking, yes. Our first issue will have a short, eight-page back-up by a new penciller and a Chicago-area writer, whom we have great hopes for.

All art submissions should be sent - Xeroxes, not originals, not anything that has to be returned - to Joe Staton, our art director. [Send them to him at First Comics, Inc., 1014 Davis Street, Evanston, Illinois 60201.] Writers - We're probably going to have to wait at least six months on that.

LOC: Do you, then, feel that comics are more importantly a visual medium and less importantly a story-line medium?

Gold: No, I believe that what makes comic art unique is the fact that it is a synthesis of the written word and the drawn picture. Therefore, I personally have a sort of a predilection for writer/artists. You know, Will Eisner, Carl Barks--we can do this game for a long time. And if you look at it...for example, Mike Grell is both writing and drawing our third book. Frank Brunner - whereas he's not dialoguing it - is plotting and breaking down **Warp,** as well as pencilling it. So I will state I certainly have a prejudice in that regard.

But that's a personal prejudice; it's not a policy decision, either on the part of our company or on the part of the editorial policies of our company. Right now, we're working with one new writer - one person who [whereas he's done a lot of theatrical work] has never written comic books before. We are dealing with several other writers who have quite a track record in terms of writing comics and - We're just not announcing these names right now.

The situation regarding **E-Man** is that we did offer it to Nick, who is in a precarious situation. So, in that respect, I sort of regret that we have had an undue emphasis on the artists of our first releases. But we're only really talking about **E-Man** here, because it's not that the person we haven't announced on **Warp** is not a writer [it's a dialogist, in the traditional sense of the word], and **Sable,** of course, has a writer/artist.

So no, we have no lower priority, none whatsoever. But **E-Man** and **Warp** are established. We know where **E-Man** starts, and we have a whole legacy behind us. We have the scripts for three plays behind us on **Warp.** So our third property is **Sable,** which is being written by the guy who drew it.

I hope to sign an agreement at the Chicago ComiCon on one of [the other titles] and, if that's the case, we may even be able to announce it there, but I'm not certain. I will not announce it unless it's in writing.

LOC: Many people working in comics today seem to be acting as transmitters of other people's literary experiences —feeding back only their experiences of others' comic books.

Gold: Oh, I quite agree with you.

LOC: Have you found anyone producing his own, original, personal experiences in comics?

Gold: Mike Grell is using a lot of his own experiences and interests in **Sable.**

LOC: Mike was a paid assassin going into the Middle East and wiping people out?

Gold: Pretty much, yeah. That's what Mike is all about. [Laughs] Without doing a twenty-five-minute biography of Mike Grell: He is a Vietnam veteran who has acquired certain skills and certain interests. I think the appeal of **Sable** to me is that it is probably the book that best takes advantage of Mike Grell's talents. It's an urban mercenary type of book, dealing with very contemporary issues - terrorism, that sort of thing. I think it's a very good and a very viable concept; it's interesting to do a book that is relevant to our situation in the 1980's.

Mike knows more about that sort of thing than almost anybody else I know in the comics business - possibly outside of Larry Hama. His enthusiasm for the book, his concepts, the artwork we've seen so far make it a book that we can really get behind easily. Because of [his background], he has an interest in weaponry and he knows what he's talking about. He's done work for hunting magazines and that sort of thing, as well, and, I think, from a very sane standpoint.

LOC: You're not expecting this to turn into How to Kill a Burglar?

Gold: No, I'm not looking to use this as a forum for whatever disagreements I may have with the National Rifle Association - which, personally, are considerable. Mike's character lives within very, very carefully defined parameters - very well-defined parameters - and those parameters are common to comics. In the late Sixties, when an awful lot of us had our hair down to our ankles and were preaching [if not non-violence] certainly a more non-violent attitude, we would also go home and dig out our copies of **Batman** and **Blackhawk** and enjoy what are somewhat right-wing fantasies. And I think that there's a tradition of that in comics when you're dealing with any sort of heroic tradition. And that's what they are: They're fantasies. To what extent Mike's book touches on the real world, I think, is considerable, and Mike knows what he's speaking of. But **Sable** doesn't run around teaching people how to blow away their neighbors. We're not in the business of teaching people how to kill.

I should say that another book that we have scheduled, which we will announce, I suspect, in about a month, takes that whole direction in terms of issues that are relevant today in a totally different direction. So we're really trying to deal with contemporary themes - themes that are not "contemporary" in the 1960's sense, but contemporary in the 1980's.

LOC: Someone recently commented that comics today reflect a solely urban viewpoint, that all we're getting from New York comics is a New York viewpoint. Is this what we see from **First Comics** - an urban viewpoint?

Gold: I think people may see us playing around a little bit with Chicago up front, but that will not be a dominating influence. I think that's becoming less true of **DC** and **Marvel** with respect to New York, but we'll see a little bit of that in our books up front - but we'll be getting away from it pretty fast.

Most of **Warp** takes place in Fen-Ra, not Chicago.

E-Man obviously has his own situations worked out.

Sable isn't particularly focused on Chicago at all. It is urban; it's also international. We're dealing with the Middle East as much as we are with America; we're dealing with Washington more than we are with New York.

LOC: How is Grell qualified to deal with the Middle East?

Gold: In terms of the issues themselves. In terms of issues of mercenaries and terrorism, Mike knows his stuff. In terms of background, Mike can do his research as well as anyone else. Carl Barks never visited most of the lands he wrote about.

LOC: If demand is high on a particular issue of a title, are there facilities for reprinting it?

Gold: Yes. From a collector's standpoint, a second printing is a second printing, no matter what. It's not the original printing. But our interest lies in reprinting material that is very much in demand in a high-quality format—as in a collection at the end of the year or in a slick-paper type of thing.

LOC: Are you aiming at bookstores at all with such collections?

Gold: Yes. We have not started the process yet, but that is our intention.

LOC: How closely do you work with your printer?

Gold: Very closely. First of all, on a contractual basis. Second of all, on a very, very close working relationship - not only with our rep, but with the various people in the various production departments, both with our printers and with our engravers. We are touring their facilities; we are developing personal relationships with these people.

Throughout the greater printing process, there are different people at different stages. There are color separators; there are the people who are responsible to us for their work. There are also production people involved in various nuances of that work. We have a representative who's in charge of our account in the broader sense; then, again, if we have a production problem or a shipping problem or what have you, we will be dealing with those specific people.

LOC: What is your lead time?

Gold: I don't know how to answer that, because the schedule we have is a six-month schedule. We essentially start working on a book six months before it hits the

newsstands. We have to start working by six months before - and that has a lot of oxygen in it. I mean, **Marvel** sometimes starts working on a book about an hour before it goes to press. And I'm not saying this to put **Marvel** down. **Marvel** actually had to print one page in black-and-white, because it couldn't get the color corrections in on time. We're trying to avoid that.

LOC: Who owns the rights to the various characters?

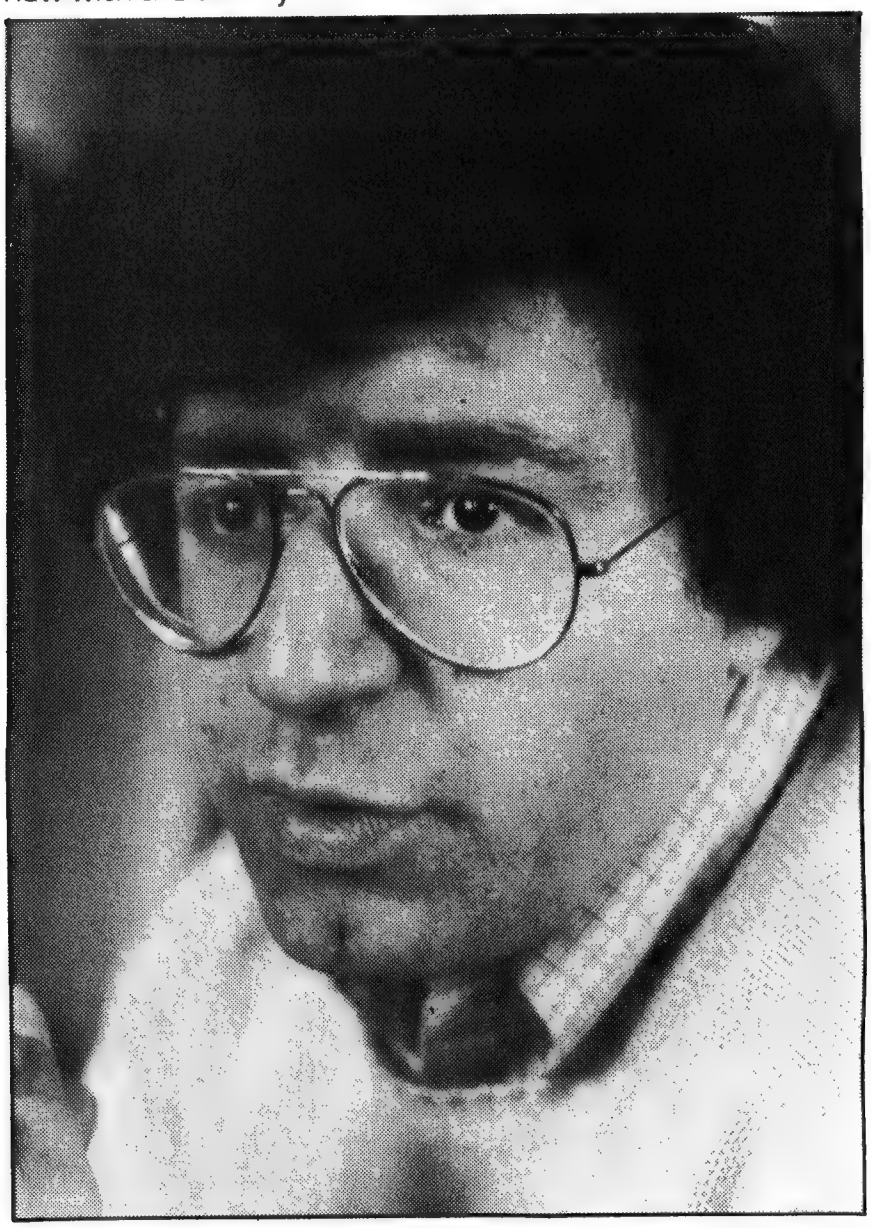
Gold: Mike owns **Sable,** licensed to us. We act as Mike's agent, so he doesn't get 100% [of any merchandising sales]; we get our agent's fee. Quite frankly, [marketing] is Rick Obadiah's background. I have some of that background, myself.

The three principals are very actively involved in other media in the broadest sense, either as agents or as producers. We have some merchandising contracts already, through the services of Rick Felber [First Comics' business manager and treasurer]. Obadiah's background is very much into Hollywood and into theatricals. We have those contacts; we have been exploiting those contacts.

LOC: What merchandising contracts do you have already with **Warp?**

Gold: We'll be announcing that soon.

LOC: How would you compare the work you're doing now with the work you did for **DC?**



Rick Obadiah
Publisher

Gold: Apples and oranges. I will not have primary responsibility for promotion of this company. Rick Obadiah and Rick Oliver will be primarily responsible for that. I will be helping get it off the ground.

I have a background in both TV and radio and, really, all forms of print. I have had many clients in book publishing. Rick Obadiah's background is in Hollywood and also in television, although not as a producer; he only produced one show, but that one show [**Bleacher Bums**] won an Emmy. Rick Felber's background is in manufacturing, and we do have all of that to offer.

We're not going out of our way to tell people that this is their chance to get in on the ground floor [of merchandising First Comics' products], because we're discounting that. We would be offering something at a lower price. We have been very active in exploiting the **Warp** rights, because that is established - very, very active in that regard. We have not really moved in with **E-Man** or with **Sable** yet; we don't have much to show.

LOC: What is your view of "normal" newsstand distribution of comics compared with direct-sales distribution?

Gold: Publishers in the broadest sense - all magazine publishers - are in the same situation, where they have to print at least twice as many copies as they sell. Paper prices being what they are, distribution costs being what they are, they just can't afford it.

A lot of very big newsstand magazines have failed in the last year because of that. It is not very difficult for the wholesalers - the 300-odd independent distributors - to move over into an "order-first" area, where they order the copies they know they're going to sell, reducing returns to, perhaps, 10% of their total order. And I think that is the wave of the future. This is the only real future the publishers have. Publishers, in the broadest sense, are no longer dependent upon the independent distributor system. **TV Guide, [The National Enquirer,** for that matter], film magazines, Time-Life magazines - routinely work on those types of levels, and we're going to see more and more publishers do that.

What we're seeing now is more and more non-comics publishers getting involved in direct distribution systems. We're seeing a lot of direct distributors handling a lot more non-comics material. Now, there's peecedent for this. There's considerable precedent for this. Independent News was established by **National Periodical Publications,** and they went on to distribute many, many, many magazines well beyond comic books. And they distributed many comics publishers, **Marvel** and **American Comics** [in addition to **National**], back in the early Sixties.

What we're seeing now is the direct distributors getting involved in that activity more and more. We're seeing more non-comic-book stores, magazine one-stop places, where you can go into a store and pick up almost any magazine. We're seeing more and more of those people getting involved in getting their books on a direct-sales basis - in other words, placing their order for the books and getting those books in. To what extent those books may or may not be returnable is negotiable between the distributor and the retailer - which, by the way, is a point of law. [If we are not selling the magazines ourselves, we -being a publisher - cannot dictate those terms. We can only negotiate the terms on an individual

basis to our distributors and our sub-distributors.)

What we're seeing is smaller places, out-of-the-way places, getting their comic books through the direct-sale network for a variety of reasons, one of which is it's much more profitable for them. For another, they know that they're not going to be stuck with a warehouse full of books that they can never get out to the newsstands. It's more efficient for them.

We're seeing convenience stores all across the country getting into this. We're seeing Greyhounds and train stations (presuming if there are any train stations left) getting involved in this sort of thing, and we're also seeing distributors and retailers slowly but surely moving into the shopping malls.

LOC: How will the kid in non-urban or suburban America get **First Comics** - via small, local stores?

Gold: Many smaller stores are already in the business of ordering from distributors directly. They get many of their paperback books, many of their trade paperbacks that way. They will be getting our books - getting **Pacific** and the other books, as well. Many of them already are; that's one of the reasons why the printruns on some of these direct-only titles are as high as they are. As comic-book stores move more and more into shopping centers and that sort of thing (not necessarily the biggest shopping centers - you really have to prove your stuff before you get there - but the smaller shopping centers), we're seeing more and more stores opening up in these. Kids who are not part of fandom per se, who do not have a neighborhood comic-book store, will be getting their books in that way. That is the future. That and home video are really the only things that have grown in the last three years.

LOC: Can potential readers subscribe to **First Comics?**

Gold: Yes. We'll be taking out ads fairly aggressively. We're not going to be really offering discount subscriptions; we're not going to try to take people out of the comic-book stores. It's mostly as a convenience to people who don't live near direct outlets. Now we are investigating different ways of packaging, so that, if we will offer a book at--let's say--95% of cover price, the difference between the discounted price and what we're actually going to be charging will be spent in packaging, so that collectors will not get battered books in the mail. We're going to be doing more than just sending them in manila envelopes.

LOC: You see direct distribution growing in the U.S.; does this apply, too, to Canada and Mexico?

Gold: Yes, it certainly does. People who are distributing along the border are only going to see legal problems slowing them down across the border. But we've already seen that the direct sales distribution network extends into Canada. There are three or four sub-distributors in Canada. I'd be surprised if some of those sub-distributors aren't handling Mexico already. I just don't know.

LOC: You say that "order-first" distribution via direct distributors is "the wave of the future." In this set-up, the publisher produces only as many copies as he has orders for. This is the wave of the present in England, and the result has been a decline in sales of titles until they have to be merged with other titles.

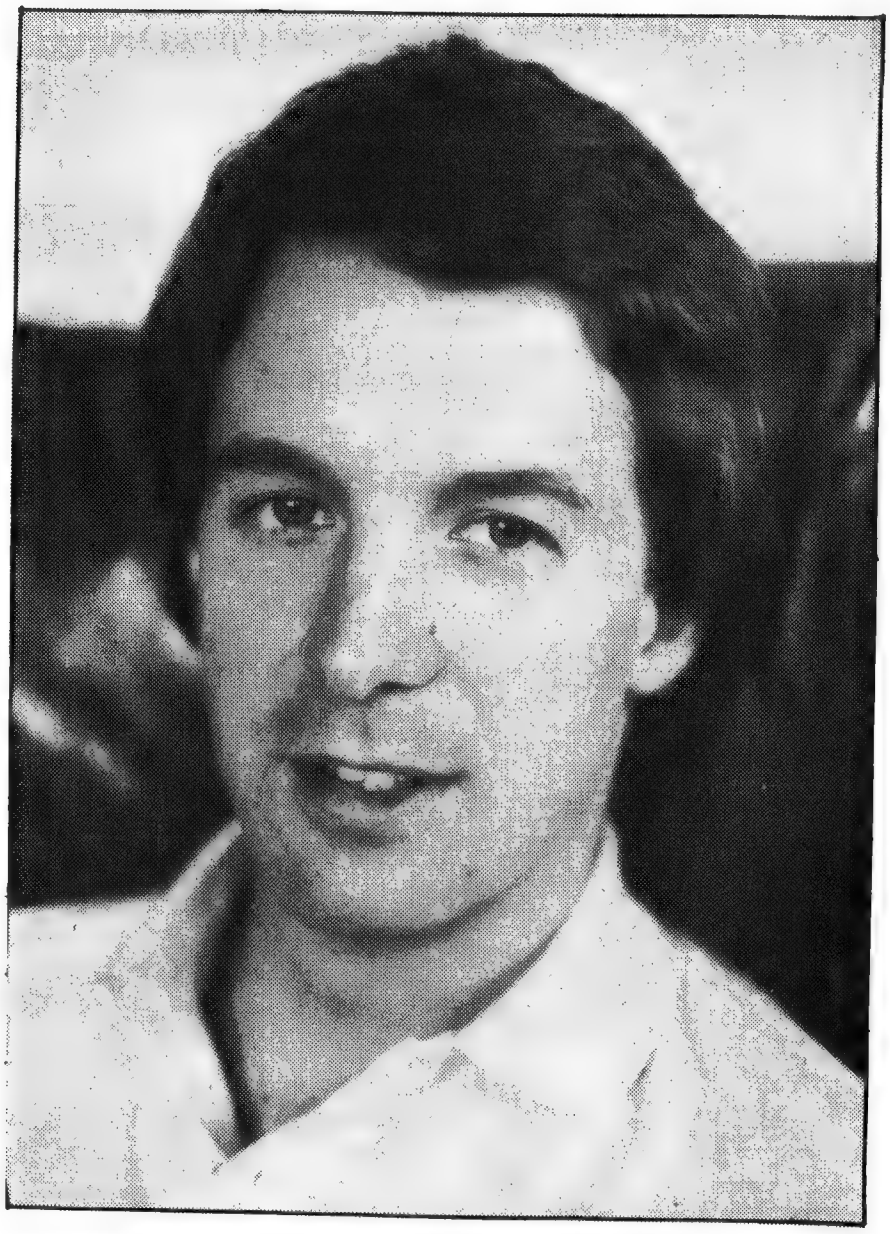
Gold: I think that's a saner way of doing things. But that, too, is a very integrated system; that system has not changed for at least thirty years.

LOC: That means the inevitable death of a title. How do you see that as a promising future?

Gold: The problem with that is that British comic books have the one great weakness that American comics have, which is that they're underpriced. It's not worth the distributor's effort to shore up.

What we've seen with **2000 A.D.**, for example, is once a year or so they do a boom issue, where they put a lot of television advertising behind their product - put in giveaways, that sort of thing - and that dramatically increases the circulation and it gives them a whole year before it whittles down to the point where they need another boom issue. It's a relatively new philosophy. It's something that a lot of the Marvel British weeklies have not had - I'm talking about the weeklies here, not the monthlies. Perhaps they haven't been able to afford to; perhaps they just don't like that philosophy.

There's no question in my mind that **Eagle** was created for many, many reasons (I'm sure that they hoped to make money, and I know they wanted to merchandise "Dan Dare"), but one of the effects is that, if it flops, it's something to merge into **2000 A.D.** and boost its circulation.



Rick Oliver
Associate Editor

Certainly, ITC is a much, much, much bigger organization than Marvel International. So what we see here is a British publisher being able to improve that system where, about every 38 issues, they go up in circulation and they start the whole process over again. Now, there are a lot of differences between the British system of distributing comics and the American direct sales system, because in England it's very difficult to order more copies. Whereas here, **Daredevil** was selling relatively poorly for five years in direct and, slowly but surely over the course of twelve months, Frank Miller caught on, everybody increased in increments their orders, and now it's one of the best-selling comics around.

We do have the other thing, too - what I think all publishers are going to do - certainly, we are as our line expands - is get involved more actively in advertising promotion, so that we can goose up our sales the way the British magazines have without the risk of the normal attrition rate. **2000 A.D.,** without any sort of boom issue, can get better with every subsequent issue - yet sales will still decrease. The fault of the system. We don't have that in America within the direct sales system, yet.

LOC: Speaking of advertising, comics that we buy from the newsstand sometimes seem to be 50-50 comics and ads.

Gold: There's about 22 pages of story material in Marvel comics now.

LOC: Are First Comics going to be carrying outside advertising? If so, how much of your budget is going to be subsidized by outside advertising?

Gold: Wow, that's two unrelated questions.

The first is yes, we will have some advertising - a couple of pages. We have 28 pages' worth of story in each issue, and letter pages and feature pages are on top of that. As you can see, there's not a hell of a lot of room left for paid advertising. But for what room there may be available, we are more than willing to take paid advertising. We have taken some already for **Warp #1** and **#2** and **E-Man #1**, though we haven't really started to solicit it yet.

Therefore, in response to your second question, really none of our budget is subsidized by advertising.

LOC: At this point?

Gold: Ummmmm, yeah. At this point, that's true. We are not looking - and part of our commitment to our investors is that at no point is advertising budgeted in to defray expenses.

LOC: Is that clear profit? If so, how is it divided? Does the creator of a comic good enough to draw advertising get a cut?

Gold: We have no plans for that right now, because it's not a real thing.

All I can say is that at the point when our board of directors and our stockholders find that we have accumulated enough advertising revenue to make anything worthwhile, we'll deal with it at that point. I'm not trying to evade your question; we haven't dealt with it.

LOC: Are shares of stock in **First Comics, Inc.** generally available?

Gold: We're a private corporation. We're not a publicly traded company. Therefore, we are not at any point announcing publicly that anybody who wants a piece of this action can have it. And that's a securities point - an important securities point. As far as people we may be working with, our relationship with people we are working with is the same as private investors - which is it's a private communication between the people we work with and us.

LOC: What is the question interviewers ask you most often?

Gold: "What does **'First Comics'** mean?" "Why do we call ourselves **'First Comics'?"** There's about eighteen different reasons why we call ourselves "First Comics," but, quite frankly, I think the most important one is that we were fully aware that people would start asking us why did we call ourselves "First Comics?"

At the July Chicago ComicCon, First Comics announced that the additional two titles which they will be producing are STARSLAYER(after issue #6, the last Pacific Comics issue) and AMERICAN FLAG, a new title written and drawn by Howard Chaykin.

COSMIC VISIONS

ORDERING INFORMATION

TERMS: Please include $1.00 for postage if your order is under $10.00 We will pay postage for orders totaling more than that. However, *always* include an additional $1.50 for special packing if you order posters, records, or portfolios. We ship via United Parcel Service so please include a street address we can ship your order to. UPS does not deliver to P.O. Boxes. If we must we can ship your order via the U.S. Mail, but please add an additional two weeks waiting time for the usual mail delays.

CANADA AND FOREIGN ORDERS: Please add an additional 10% to your total to help offeset extra postage costs. Please don't send foreign currency or personal checks. Only payment in U.S. Dollars will be accepted (use either a Postal Money Order or a bank draft drawn on a U.S. Bank).

DISCOUNT: If your order totals more than $25.00 and no singleitem makes up more than half of the total, then you may deduct 10% from your order's total. Sets or already discounted items do not qualify for this discount.

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A CASE OF MISPLACED TALENTS— ENGLEHART'S JUSTICE LEAGUE of AMERICA

By Darren Madigan

Everywhere you turn lately, you hear the name "Englehart". He's the biggest thing to hit comics since Lee and Kirby - or that seems to be the general concensus among the fan press. His stature has grown with every script he's put out. Articles are written at great length on his various and sundry runs on different books - **Detective, Avengers, Mr. Miracle, Captain America, the Defenders, the Hulk,** even his relatively few **Hero for Hire**s. And the accolades run on - Englehart's **Detective** was the finest example of comics writing in the world, Englehart's **Avengers** have never been equalled at any other time in that book's history, Englehart's **Hulk** was wonderful, his **Mr. Miracle** was surpassed only by Kirby himself, and so on, and so on. However, there is one ten issue run that doesn't seem to get talked about so much anymore. None of the fans seem to remember, or even to be aware of it. The run in question is **Justice League of America** issues 139-150, with the exception of issues 147 and 148, which were a crossover with the **Legion of Superheroes** written by Marty Pasko and Paul Levitz, and partially issue 139, which was split between a story by Cary Bates and a story by Englehart. Why this ten issue run manages to evade discussion so adroitly, in spite of the fact that in it Englehart almost totally revamped the series (even to the extent of writing a brand new, secret, untold origin of the JLA) is an interesting question. The answer to it, however, is simple - those ten issues of the JLA were possibly Englehart's biggest failure.

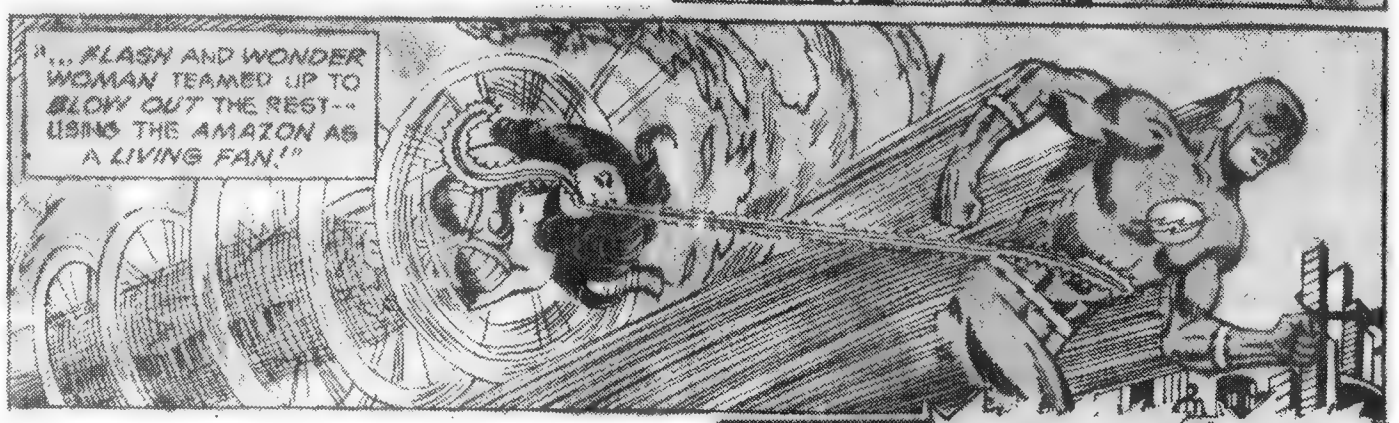
From an article-writing viewpoint, that first Englehart JLA story was placed very conveniently, coming as it did in the same issue as a Cary Bates lead feature. This is convenient because it allows for an instant comparison between the "standard JLA" and Englehart's version of the book. Cary Bates is probably the one writer working in comics today that can be seen as the best example of **"DC comics writing".** His stories are usually heavily oriented around the plot, with incidental character establishment and no character development whatsoever. This is consonant with DC's editorial policies; the major difference between DC characters and Marvel characters being that DC characters do not change over periods of time. DC characters are what they are, forever; their personalities do not progress or change or "grow". Thus, the major character work done at DC is that of character establishment, not development. Cary Bates is a strong plotter, as well as being a master of swiftly and economically establishing any given character's personality. His real strength, however, lies in advancing and explaining his plots to the reader. No matter how offbeat, bizarre, or complex. Bates makes the reader understand what is going on. Any character work done is usually combined with giving the reader necessary information for plot comprehension. The Bates story in JLA #139 ["The Cosmic Conspiracy Against Adam Strange"] is a shining example of Bates' scripting strengths, as well as an example of the typical approach to the Justic League.

The story opens with a symbolic splash page that instantly tells us the main plot gimmick. We see Black Canary, Green Lantern, Green Arrow, and Hawkman being blasted down by a group of strangely garbed warriors, while greyish, phantom-forms of Superman, Batman, Aquaman, and Wonder Woman look on

helplessly. The phantom figures' word balloons tell us all we need to know - "Our teammates - hopelessly overwhelmed by these 73rd Century warriors - being shot down in front of our eyes! And there's nothing we can do to help them!" As a hook designed to get the average reader to read the comic, it is very effective - even more so when the reader gets through with the story and realizes that it was not misleading in the slightest - that gimmick underlaid the entire story and that scene actually occurred.

The story itself was typical Bates. For some reason, five of the Leaguers had been reduced to a phantom state (Superman, Aquaman, Wonder Woman, Batman, and the Flash were the afflicted five) and were unable to touch, speak to, or in any way communicate with their four JLA buddies (GA, GL, Hawkman, and the Canary) who had also answered this month's emergency signal. While the four solid Leaguers wondered where their buddies were, and the five ghostly heroes puzzled over their predicament, Adam Strange teleported aboard with the explanation. Details don't really matter - the basics are that it was all a sinister scheme by that archvillain of Adam's, Kanjar Ro. Using Adam himself, Ro had caused the five beleaguered Leaguers to be blasted with radiation that would reduce them to their phantom state. Only Adam could see and hear them - to the rest of the world, they no longer existed. At that point, the JLA discovered what they thought was a cure for the condition, when the phantom Flash spoted a transductor unit behind Green Lantern overheating and getting ready to explode. Though Aquaman assured the Flash that any rescue-attempt was fordoomed to failure, due to the Flash's wraithlike condition, the Flash tried anyway - at which point he solidified and rushed GL across the room mere nanoseconds before the hapless hero would have been vaporized. This caused the other JLAers to conclude that seeing one of their buddies in danger would cause the "cure" - acting sort of on the principle of adrenalin. Kanjar Ro beamed a challenge to the JLA to fight him in his favorite time-era, the 73rd Century. GL used his power ring to beam the entire satellite forward in time (the only way to ensure that the phantom members would also be brought along) and the JLA set out to knock the stuffing out of the diabolical Kanjar Ro. Instead Kanjar Ro's 73rd century soldiers tromped the five solid JLAers, while their ectoplasmic buddies looked on in helpless horror, bewildered at their failure to solidify so they could go to the rescue. Adam, horrified at the fight's outcome, returned to the JLA satellite, where he discovered that he had been wrong about the cure - ac-

"WITH THE FIREBALL DISSIPATING INTO SCORES OF SMALLER BLAZES, THERE WASN'T A SPLIT-SECOND T WASTE, WHILE SUPERMAN USED HIS SUPER-LUNGS TO SUCK IN SOME FLAMES..."



For years the JLA functioned smoothly as a team, as shown here in a story by Bates.

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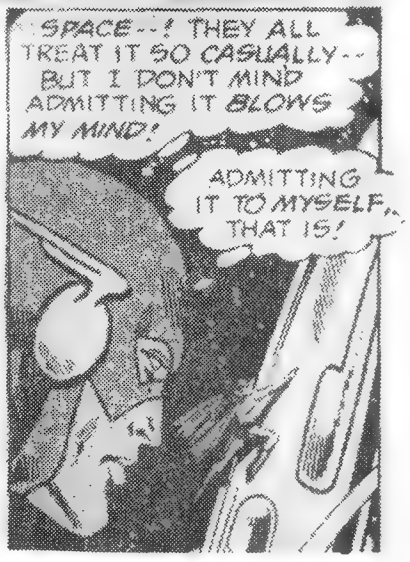

Under Englehart, JLA members suddenly began acting differently - the character shifting became a little too fast and this upset continuity.

tually, Kanjar Ro had set up the situation to make the somewhat moronic JLA reach exactly that conclusion. Once Adam discovered what the real cure was, he returned to Earth and used it on the four afflicted Leaguers, who with the aid of their recovering comrades, proceded to beat the daylights out of their foes [aided by the fact that Superman had used his heat-vision to melt down the 73rd Century superpower-adapters that the soldiers had used in the previous battle]. Finally, Kanjar Ro posed as the 73rd Century Green Lantern in order to congratulate the JLA on their victory right under their noses, which would give him something to gloat about next time. Adam, however, suspected the truth and threw a yellow rock at the disguised villain, which he deflected with his "power ring" - but of course, power rings don't work against yellow! Superman pun-

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NOW--WHAT'S ON YOUR MINDS?
LOOK, SUPES --WE WANT WONDER WOMAN OUT OF THE JLA!
SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, OLLIE! I ONLY THINK SHE SHOULD HAVE A CHECK-UP!
24

ched Kanjar Ro into unconsciousness, and Adam wes the hero of the day [though one wonders what would have happened if he had been wrong - what exactly is the penalty for arbitrarily belting a Green Lantern with a rock?] The main thrust of this story was the plot - the only characterization that was done in the story was the establishment of Green Arrow's and Hawkman's personalities through differing speech patterns [very surface characterization] and the re-establishment of the fact that Green Lantern is the Flash's "best friend". Beyond that, almost every bit of dialogue is expository, giving the reader some vital bit of information [and, because Bates is such a fine craftsman, the average reader will not realize it unless he is looking for it]. While this sort of thing is anathema to the average Marvel fan, to whom characterization is one of the major gods, the average Marvel fan does not [obviously] read DC comics. The main thrusts of a typical DC comic are action, adventure, and plot. This is even more true with the JLA, where most of the heroes have their own books and thus no character work that conflicts with that given in their own magazines can be done. Thus, the emphasis in the JLA has always been on action, adventure, and plot, not on characterization. Note that characterization done in the Bates tale centered primarily around Green Arrow and Hawkman, who were not, at the time, appearing anywhere else, and the Flash, who was given nothing that conflicted with his own book [not surprising, considering that Cary Bates has written the Flash for the past seven years].

On the other hand, the one attribute that Englehart is most lauded for is characterization. Steve Englehart is, without a doubt, one of the finest scripters that is currently working in comics. His best attribute is his character work. But it also is the major component of Englehart's work, and it would not seem untoward to suggest that Englehart is incapable of writing comics which do not rely heavily on characterization. This conjecure is born out by examination of the Englehart JLA story that comprised the latter half of JLA 139 ["The Ice Age Cometh"].

The plot of the story centered around the occurence of a "New Ice Age"; that is, the equator was icing up [specifically the fictional country of Ecuador] and noone knew why. The League arrived in Ecuador, to render what aid they could. Just as they arrived, a newsflash from Radio Free America informed them that Captain Cold, the Icicle, and Minister Blizzard had teamed up and gone on a rampage throughout Gotham City. Obvisouly, the two cases were connected, Four Leaguers are delegated to fly back to Gotham, stop the crooks, and figure out what was going on - Wonder Woman, who had battled Minister Blizzard in the past, the Flash, for the same reasons concerning Captain Cold, Black Canary, because both she and the Icicle were from Earth 2, and Green Arrow, who was going to "keep an eye on them". The rest of the present Leaguers [Superman, Batman, Green Lantern, Hawkman, Aquaman, the Atom and the Elongated Man] would remain to help Ecuador. When the four delegated heroes arrive in Gotham, they run into the three freezer-felons almost immediately, as the crooks returned to the scene of their latest crime to pick up a sizeable gem [The Star of Calcutta] that they had overlooked before. After a brief tussle, the villains are subdued - at which point it is discovered that someone had copped the gem regardless - and it was not any of the villains already introduced, though it apparantly was someone capable of getting through a ring of protective lasers. Stumped, the four Leaguers returned to Ecuador, where the rest of the JLA were having no luck stopping the growing cold front. There they compared notes, at which point it became obvious that they were overlooking something - something which Hawkman eventually figured out to be - the Shadow Thief! Yes, the Shadow Thief had stolen the gem, under cover of shadows set up when Minister Blizzard "missed" a shot

WHA--? J'ONN J'ONZZ... THE MARTIAN MAN-HUNTER? WHAT'S HE GOT TO DO WITH THIS?
SHHH! EVERY-THING!
HELLO! IF YOU ARE VIEWING THIS MESSAGE, ONE OF MY FRIENDS HAS DECIDED TO INFORM YOU OF OUR FIRST CABAL TOGETHER! SINCE I AM THE ONE PRIMARILY RESPONSI-BLE FOR IT, I HAVE ASKED THAT I BE ITS ADVOCATE!
AS YOU LISTEN, PLEASE TRY TO UNDER-STAND WHY WE HAD TO HIDE THE TRUTH!
IT WASN'T YOU WE FEARED-- IT WAS THE TIMES!
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at Wonder Woman and hit an overhead light instead. But even more importantly - the Shadow Thief gains the ability to become a shadow from an alien device called a dimensiometer which, when activated, destroys Earth's magnetic field. Long enough usage could conceivably trigger a New Ice Age - and to keep the League from suspecting him in connection with the strange weather, the Shadow Thief hired the three cold-crooks to band together and take the heat off him [pun certainly intended]. Knowing this, the four delegates [joined by Green Lantern, Hawkman, and the Atom] returned to the prison now holding the frosty finks, to question them at greater length. Upon arriving, they discovered themselves to be in the midst of a jailbreak - the Shadow Thief was in the process of breaking his compatriots free. The JLA descended mightily upon the heads of the refrigerated reprobates, defeating them with no real difficulty. However, the Shadow Thief was another story, since, in his shadow form, no one could lay a hand on him - except the Phantom Stranger, who conveniently showed up just then to collar the Thief and turn off his dimensiometer, something that no one else in the JLA was capable of, despite Green Arrow's claims to the contrary. The story ended with a shot of the unthawing Ecuador, while the entire League stood around looking fatuously triumphant.

From a plot standpoint, this one isn't bad--though there is really no excuse for that eleventh hour Phantom Stranger save. The basic idea of teaming up Captain Cold, the Icicle, and Minister Blizzard is a good one - and combined with the probably pretty much forgotten detail about the Shadow Thief's dimensiometer, it had a lot of promise. However, what this plot synopsis doesn't mention is all of the character work that Englehart wrote into the story. Of the twelve participating Leaguers, half were given new, distinct, individual personalities - some of which fit, some of which didn't. Superman, for example, was characterized as sort of the JLAs "big buddy", the guy who keeps an eye on things and makes sure everything is running right. Hawkman was given his typical characterization - that of a cool, calm, highly intelligent and reasonable scientific sort with a penchant for stilted dialogue. These are fine; if the Superman character is unprecedented, it certainly isn't out of line. However, the Flash became a bumbling bumpkin who liked to use big scientific terms, Wonder Woman acted like a haughty bitch, Batman was grim, no-nonsense, and absolutely humorless, and the Atom received an inferiority complex. Obviously, those characterizations were pulled out of thim air - and if the Atom's is excusable on the grounds that he isn't appearing anywhere else, so there is no conflict of personality, the others are not - Wonder Woman, Batman, and the Flash all had their own series, and all were established in ways that refuted Englehart's characterizations of them. [Batman is indeed at times grim and no-nonsense; he does however possess a sense of humor and he is not constantly driven and single-minded.] The story does not unfold as smoothly as the Bates tale, for Englehart frequently takes time out from advancing the plot to throw in little bits of characterization that tell the reader nothing whatsoever. Midway through the story, for example, Englehart wrote in a six-panel scene featuring a conversation between the three solid jailbirds which told the reader absolutely nothing concerning the plot, save the Captain Cold doesn't much like the idea of a New Ice Age, and that Minister Blizzard and the Icicle don't really care. Somewhere in the conversation the idea is dropped that the three criminals may or may not be responsible for the New Ice Age, but Englehart does nothing with it - and in fact, the idea is dropped in such a confusing manner that one has to reread the sequence to understand it. The sequence does establish the personalities of the villains quite well - but that is all it does. Ditto for a lot of the conversations between League members. If one were to cut all the character work in the 17 page story, one would find that the whole plot could probably have been done in eight pages [provided that

WHILE, HIGH ABOVE, THE TWO NEWEST MEMBERS OF THE "CLOWNS"--HAWKGIRL AND RED TORNADO--ARE JOINING HAWKMAN IN THE "GAME"...
I HOPE WE FIND HIM! I WANT TO CATCH HIM FOR YOU...
AND PROVE THE LEAGUE WAS CORRECT IN WELCOMING ME BACK!
WHY DOES HE FEEL HE HAS TO PROVE ANYTHING, KATAR?
REDDY HAS ALWAYS NURTURED AN INFERIORITY COMPLEX, SHAYERA-- FOR BEING AN ANDROID! AND--WHO CAN BLAME HIM?
YOU HELPED HIM AGAINST THE CONSTRUCT BY BELIEVING IN HIS ABILITIES--BUT IT WILL TAKE MORE THAN THAT TO TEACH HIM SELF-RESPECT!
LOOK--!
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someone like Cary Bates or E. Nelson Bridwell were writing it).

This approach is characteristic of Englehart's entire run on the Justice League. He consistently put characterization ahead of plot consistency or exposition, to the point where close analysis of most of his JLA stories shows a lot of really effective, well-handled character work over mostly humdrum plots. And since, as hopefully has already been established, character work is not one of the major components necessary to a successful JLA story, and plot definitely is, the JLA could not help but suffer under Englehart.

Englehart's next story focussed pretty much on Green Lantern, though Englehart made sure to do character work on all of the other appearing Leaguers as well. This story concerned the Manhunters, a group of intersteller vigilantes who turned out to be a failed project of the

SHE DID IT TO ME AGAIN! I ASK A SIMPLE QUESTION, AND SHE MAKES ME FEEL LIKE A JERK!
FURTHERMORE, SINCE THE GUARDIAN SAID OUR FRIENDS HAD ESCAPED, WE'LL NEED THE SATELLITE MONITORS TO FIND THEM!
HAVE A SEAT, OLLIE! GET COMFORTABLE!
I'LL PUNCH UP THE TAPE WE WANT, HAL!
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Guardians of the Universe. [who later created the Green Lantern Corps.] The Manhunters had been commissioned to bring in Green Lantern Hal Jordan, who had, it seems, wiped out a planet on a recent space mission. It was an accident, but Green Lantern was still guilty, and the Manhunters were still going to bring him in. Throughout this story Green Lantern was characterized as dedicated, serious, self-effacing, self-disciplined, tightly self-controlled, neurotically honest, and completely unable to bend without breaking. The fact that he had accidnetally destroyed an entire inhabited world was killing him with remorse and guilt; in fact, for the first half of the story, the JLA [who just knew it had to be a frame] fought to protect GL from the Manhunters against his will - he wanted to surrender, so he could pay for him crime. For the most part, this characterization is totally at odds with what we've seen thus far of GL; the rest of the time, Hal Jordan is a fun-loving, fearless testpilot who likes parties and girls. Dedicated he certainly is, as well as honest...and had the Guardians ordered him to surrender, he no doubt would have - though he might have argued a little first. But he never would have surrendered to the Manhunters - a bunch of galactic vigilantes with no legal standing whatsoever. Naturally, in the end it all turned out to be a frame on the part of the Manhunters, who were out to discredit the Green Lanterns, so that they could take over as the interstellar police force, and thus conquer the universe. Just as naturally, the JLA foiled the nefarious scheme, and Mark Shaw, the last human Manhunter [the originals were humanoid androids] who had been tricked into becoming a Manhunter by being told that the Manhunters stood for justice, vowed to reform and find a way to truly serve justice.

Just as odd as GL's character work was that done on some of the other JLAers. Batman, once he had been told exactly what the Manhunters did and how they operated, referred to them contemptuously from that point on as "bounty hunters" - even though it was made clear to him that the Manhunters accepted no rewards for their work; that they did it simply to serve justice. [Actually, this was a lie, but Batman didn't know that at the time.] The Manhunters were not "bounty hunters", but were simply, well, "man-hunters". Now, in fact, Batman might well despise bounty hunters, being what he is - but he had no reason for despising the Manhunters, as they were simply doing what he himself had

IT IS MY HOPE...
TO BRING HIM BACK!
I'M NO KRYPTONIAN, SUPERMAN!
AMAZON TRAINING COMES CLOSE ENOUGH IN MY BOOK, DIANA!
ANYWAY, YOU'LL BE FLYING YOUR INVISIBLE PLANE! YOU'LL GET TO SIT DOWN!
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made a career of - tracking down people wanted by the law and bringing them to justice. [Though Batman does endeavor to prevent crime when he can, for the most part his - and most other superheroes - work is concerned with apprehending the villain after the crime has been committed.] Thus, Batman's contempt for the Manhunters, at that point in the story, before he had discovered the truth about them, was highly illogical - and Batman is rarely illogical; he is, after all, the World's Greatest Detective. Wonder Woman continued her haughty bitch routine; a characterization plot thread that Englehart would use as the focus for a future story [JLA #143, "A Tale of Two Satellites"]. The Flash became a midwestern hick who didn't mind admitting - to himself, at least - that he was amazed by the League's interstellar adventures. This is a nice idea, but completely illogical; after everything that Gardner Fox, John Broome, and Cary Bates have put the Flash through for the past fifteen years or so, having him be amazed at a simple starship is downright silly. The Flash, after all, has visited several alien planets, been to several future eras, visited alternate worlds, fought off alien invaders, and such like countless times. And he boggles at a spaceship? C'mon!

Still, in the case of the Manhunters story, Englehart was obviously concerned with the plot more than with the characterization. Unfortunately, this did not hold true for his next stories, the first two Construct tales [JLA #142 and #143]. In JLA#142, "Return From Forever", Englehart let the plot pretty much disintegrate in favor of accomplishing two things - first, intense characterization on the Atom [something that had rarely, if ever, been done before] and second [but probably more important to Englehart] the return of Mantis, in the form of "Willow". This story centered around the activities of Aquaman, the Elongated Man, and the Atom during the time that the rest of the League had been battling the Manhunters. The plot of the story was somewhat silly, with none of the distinctive gimmickry that usually goes into a JLA plot. The story started with the Atom, the Elongated Man, and Aquaman out in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, swimming along, shooting the breeze. It turns out that Aquaman invited them out, to get away from it all. Now, that's bizarre enough as it is - but just then, in the middle of the Atom's soliloquy on how he doesn't want to be a superhero anymore because he feels so useless compared to the rest of the JLA, a ray blast hits the water in their midst. Looking up, the three heroes see a dogfight going on between two ships of obviously unearthly origin. One ship shoots the other down and rockets off. Aquaman enters the floating wreckage of the vanquished ship and discovers a single occupant - a young, green-skinned woman named Willow, who referred to herself as "this-one" and otherwise talked a lot like Mantis. Willow told the three JLAers that the Construct, whatever that was, was after her, and the only safe place where they could talk was in Atlantis. After some fast-talking, the three men were convinced, and they adjourned to the undersea kingdom for further palaver. Meanwhile, Englehart cut away to the hidden headquarters of the Construct, where we learned what it was - a massive machine intelligence that had formed out of all the electronic waves mankind had channelled throughout the Earth's atmosphere. The Construct lived in every electronic apparatus on the Earth - and it was determined to

I HAVEN'T BEEN THIS TONGUE-TIED AROUND A WOMAN SINCE MY FIRST DATE WITH IRIS!
HORRIBLE, ISN'T IT--THE MANHUNTERS TURNING OUT TO BE EVIL!
I'D ALMOST BELIEVED THEIR STORY OF BEING ON THE SIDE OF JUSTICE UNTIL THE GUARDIAN STRAIGHTENED US OUT!

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The story lines were good, but the "new" approach to portraying the individual characters took some getting used to for DC readers. Of course, one character who didn't change was Green Arrow, he retained his old, jolly disposition.

--AS INDEED YOU HAVE MADE CLEAR YOUR DISDAIN FOR NEARLY EVERY MEMBER OF THE JUSTICE LEAGUE, FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER!
BUT THERE IS NO TIME FOR THAT NOW!

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wipe out mankind to make way for the Age of the Machine. Plot details from this point on are pretty much necessary. For some nebulous reason having to do with her unborn child being incredibly powerful, Willow was a threat to the Construct's plans that it was endeavoring desperately to destroy. In the end, the heroes were triumphant and the Construct and his plans were destroyed, with the Atom playing a pivotal role in that destruction. This cured the Atom's inferiority complex, after which he appeared briefly in the next issue, contributing nothing of any importance. This was appropriate, as right after that, he vanished completely until JLA#150, which featured every current member of the JLA, and in which he also did absolutely nothing. Willow also vanished, after pledging the Atom to secrecy about her origins (it doubtless would have caused trouble if it became generally known how easy it was to get from one comics universe into another). The plot to this issue was nothing special; a villain showed up, menaced the Earth, and was eventually beaten. The major reason for the story was the charaacter work on the Atom; the plot was merely a necesary contrivance. Englehart repeated this pattern throughout most of the rest of his run on the JLA. In JLA #143 we got character work mostly on Wonder Woman, with some on the other Leaguers as well, and the added fillips of seeing the JLA break-up, the InjusticeGang re-form, the return of the Construct (as Construct II ring any bells, anyone?) and the introduction of the Privateer, a new superhero who turned out to be none other than Mark Shaw, the last human Manhunter last seen in JLA #141. Once more, the plot was a vehicle for the characterization; the break up of the JLA gave Englehart several wonderful opportunities for personality exploration on the various members. Mostly, though, the issue was Wonder Woman's --she started the break up by quitting the JLA, on the basis that the other JLAers were "grading" her; that is, judging everything she did too harshly, and not really accepting her fully. She especially didn't get along with the Flash or Green Arrow because, as she said,yearsof marriage had turned Barry Allen into a closet male chauvinist, and as for Green Arrow - well, there was nothing closet about his chauvinism, not to mention his downright obnoxiousness. (It is interesting to note that the two characters in the JLA that Englehart most expressly left alone were Green Arrow and Black Canary, the League's two most "regular" members, who, in fact, appeared nowhere but in the JLA at the time. Englehart could have done a lot of character work on them without conflicting with any other writer's established characters; instead, he kept a strictly hands-off attitude with them. This may perhaps be due to the fact that Green Arrow has always been the one League member with a distinctive personality, even when the others are cardboard cut-outs who exist to help unfold the plot. Englehart may have simply not wanted to tamper with the one case of characterization already present in the JLA - and since all of Black Canary's personality usually comes from her interactions with GA, he left her alone, too.) Right after her walk-out, she was taken control of by Construct II and forced to battle Superman and eventually to betray the JLA into the hands of a Construct-controlled Injustice Gang. Fortunately, the JLA triumphed, Wonder Woman was freed from the spell...and she never gave anyone in the League any problems again. Her character work was done, so Englehart moved on to someone else.

This was pretty much the routine for Englehart's tenure - every issue would showcase a certain members personality. The plot was frequently simply a device used to make the characterization entertaining. And the plots were frequently entertaining, bit by bit - for Englehart did some great bits in the JLA. His secret origin of the JLA was hilariious, if slightly idiotic. (JLA #144). JLA #145 was muddled and ultimately pointless, but it featured the Phantom Stranger - and if that wasn't enough, it also featured his death, as well as the deaths of Hawkman - and Superman! In order to bring the heroes back to the living - for they actually, really, and no foolin' did die - Englehart rewrote quite a bit of the established "Deathmythos" at DC, but since neither Count Crystal nor Azgore will probably ever show up again, that's okay. In #146, the villain was Construct III, the Red Tornado lived again, Hawkman almost quit the League, and, in the end, Hawkgirl joined, overthrowing the JLA's long-standing rule about no duplication of powers. In #149, Dr. Light Snapper Carr, and the Privateer all returned along with a new villain called (brace yourself) the Star-Tsar, who, at the end of the magazine, turned out to be Snapper Carr. But, in #150 (Englehart's last issue) the reader learned that there was more than one Star-Tsar. The Key, back from the dead again, turned out also to be the Star-Tsar, working in tandem with Snapper Carr. And, as if that weren't confusing enough, neither of them was the original Star-Tsar! The original was none other than (no, not Construct IV) - the Privateer, who had been suckering the League all along. If this short plot synopsis sounds confusing, that is only because the plot of those two issues is confusing. By the time the reader is through with the whole story, he no longer is sure which way is up, much less who the villains are and why they are doing what it is that they are. The story gave the readers a great deal of in-depth, highly effective character work on Snapper Carr and the Privateer - and a plot that was so muddled as to at times lead to conjectures as to whether or not Englehart was making this all up as he went along.

Obviously, Steve Englehart did not belong on a book of the style of the Justice League. Most of the villains that he came up with seemed fairly drab and uninspired (Count Crystal, the Construct, the Privateer, and, for the most part, the Manhunters) compared to the standard League villains he used (Dr. Light, the Key, the Injustice Gang, the Shadow Thief, Captain Cold, the Icicle, and Minister Blizzard), and he didn't really handle the standard DC villains all that well, anyhow. His plotting was humdrum, slightly monotonous, frequently confusing and often seemed to be an afterthought. His characterization was extremely well-handled and effective; unfortunately, in most cases, it was just wrong. Obviously, not all the blame for this is Englehart's; some of it must rest on the shoulders of whoever made the editorial decision to put a characterization - heavy writer on a plot-oriented book. Still, whoever's fault it was, the ten issue run of the Justice League of America by Englehart has to be looked upon pretty much as a failure - fun in parts, but still a failure.

FANDOM SHOWCASE ON . . .

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Art

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S. DE LA ROSA / J. BEATTY '80

ALAN P.
O'DHAIII4
Scott Gilbert86

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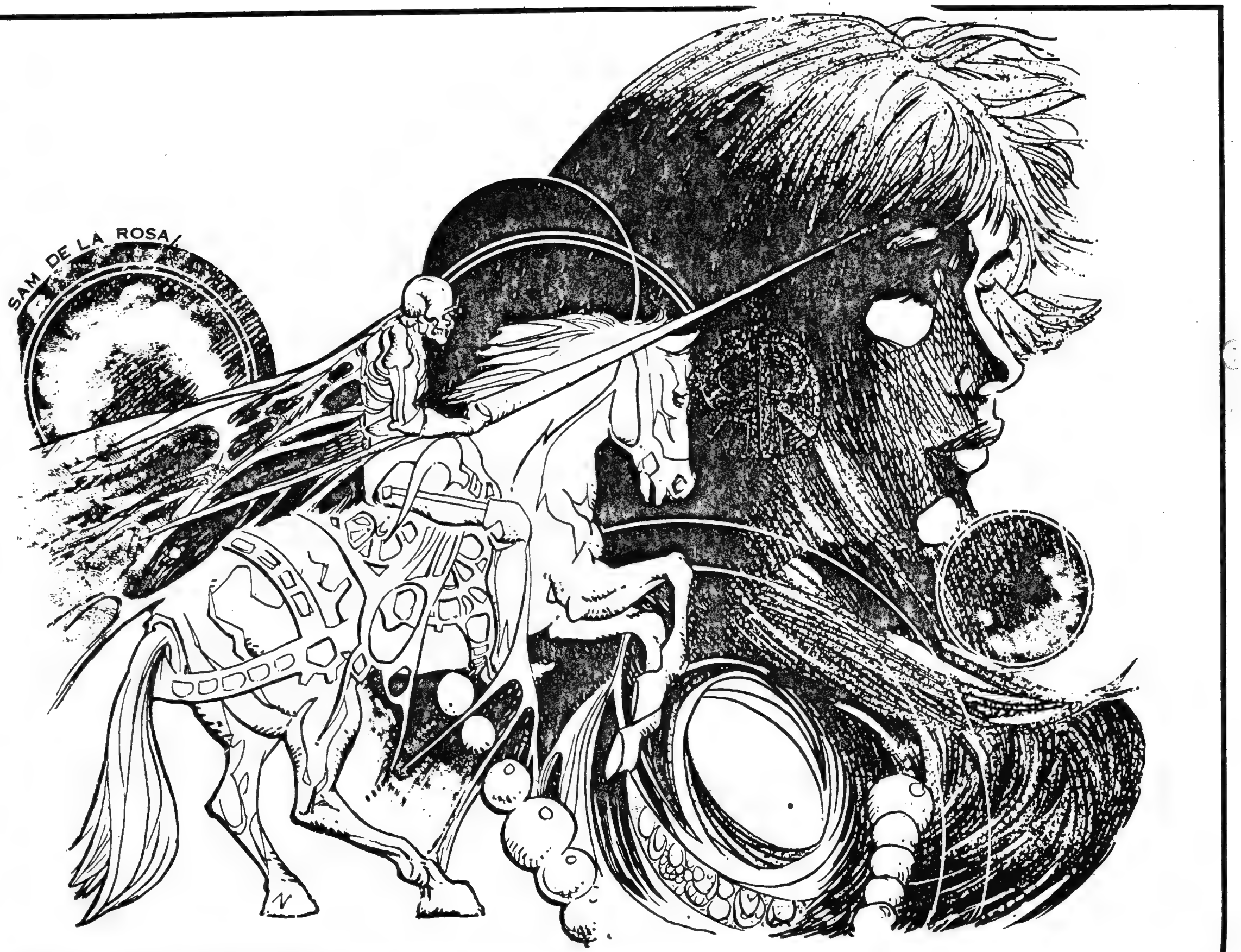
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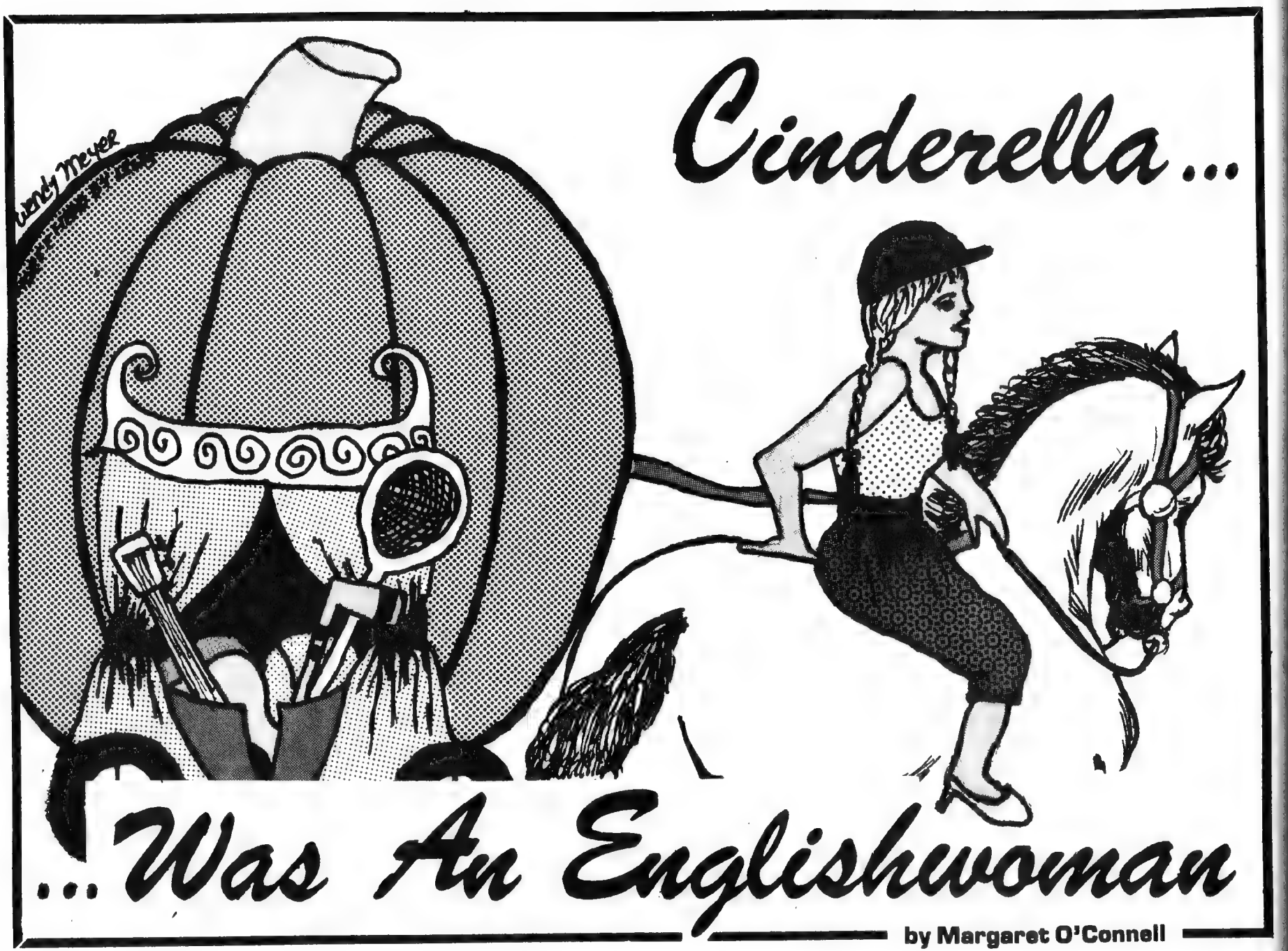


by Margaret O'Connell

There is really no American equivalent to British girl's comics. For one thing, even those American comics whose readership is composed primarily of girls, such as **Archies,** do not deliberately present themselves in a manner calculated to scare off potential male readers, festooning their front covers with cutesy rhymes about parakeets who go sledding in soap dishes, and featuring endless stories about twelve-year-old girls whose great ambition in life is to become a ballerina. In fact, very few American comics feature stories in which twelve-year-old girls [or boys] of any kind appear at all, much less function as major characters. The producers of British girl's comics weeklies, however, appear to be firmly convinced that eight-to-thirteen year old girls will not read any story that is not about an eight-to-thirteen-year-old girl. [Incidentally, the producers of the corresponding boys' weeklies do not seem to be inhibited by any such assumption, since many of their stories center around Anglicized versions of the standard soldiers, sailors, and spies found in American war comics.]

This automatically leads to some interesting complications. Barring lucky discoveries of mysterious telephone fragments that magically transform the bearer into a sixty-minute super-hero, there isn't very much an eight-to-thirteen-year-old girl can do that's interesting enough to justify a serialized story that lasts weeks or even months—at least, not if she has a normal home life. Therefore, almost all heroines of serials in British girls' weeklies are orphans—usually orphans victimized by evil aunts, uncles, or other guardians who regard persecuting their hapless neices as a full-time job. Those unfortunate enough to still have one surviving parent are usually equipped with a spiteful stepsister plotting to turn the parent against them and otherwise make their lives hell. [**"A Sister for Sandra," TRACY #68,69,** Jan. 1981, and **"I Give Her a Year!", MANDY #730,** Jan. 10, 1981]. And if all else fails, they can be saddled with ridiculously-motivated peer group problems at schooi, where they are ostracized for having unfashionably old-fangled bicycles [**"Push-along, Patti,"** Jan. 17, 1981 **TAMMY AND MISTY),** being brainy, but bad at sports [**"Belinda Bookworm,"** Jan. 17, 1981 **TAMMY AND MISTY**], or not belonging to either of the two previously established rival neighborhood cliques thrown together at the new consolidated school [**"Betty In-Between," TRACY #68-69** [although these serials continue uninterruped for months at a time, I am only citing those issues I have actually

read]].

Although the persecuted orphan theme is by far the most popular [with the comics creators, at least], it is also the most blatantly implausible in an era bristling with social workers and child welfare agencies vigilantly poised to spring to the aid of any abused child capable of complaining to the proper authorities. Perhaps for this reason, most girls' weeklies carry at least one strip which neatly side-steps the plot difficulties produced by the modern welfare state by the simple expedient of removing the scene of the action to the laissez-faire Victorian age, when child labor flourished unregulated and nobody cared whether orphaned children found proper homes with suitable guardians. [For an account of the tear-jerking, **OLIVER TWIST**ian result, see **"Steed and Peel Investigate British Girls' Comics,"** my first column on this subject, in **LOC #7.]**

In a Victorian strip, the comics creators run little risk of straining credibility by having their newly-orphaned heroine thrown out into the street and subjected to any sort of squalor they can think of, all without the benefit of intervention by an adult in a position of guardianship or authority. When the setting is present day, however, a strip which wants to retain any resemblance to reality must immediately consign a girl who has lost her parents to the care of some other supposedly responsible adult. This adult then has to be explained away, or, more frequently, revealed as wicked guardian whose respectability is only skin deep, before the heroine's heartbreaking trials and tribulations--which, after all, are the whole point of the story--can begin. As a result, the "modern" strips tend to present an even more ominous vision of the adult world than the "period" ones. The adult villains of the Victorian strips are usually professional heavies of one kind or another [generally either Fagin-type criminals or heartless rich people who make a career of oppressing the poor and unfortunate] who are not related to the particular children they victimize in any way. Therefore, their behavior is merely routinely dastardly, not an unnatural abuse of a child whom they are supposedly actively committed to protecting from harm, as is the case of the aunts, uncles, and other guardians in the contemporary strips.

As in fairy tales where the child heroes have both "good" [real] parents, who are conveniently unable to help them because they are dead or otherwise out of the picture, and "bad" parents, who are actually mere stepparents, British girls' comics make an effort to present actual mothers and fathers in a positive light, preferring to let their less traditionally revered surrogates do the dirty work of making children miserable. This can still produce a pretty unflattering picture of negligence in those cases where one parent--almost invariably the father--is still living, but is so preoccupied with his own concerns that he goes off somewhere by himself, abandoning his daughter to the care of people who turn out to have anything but her best interests at heart. For instance, there's **"Gita Guitar" [BUNTY #1183, 1201]**, whose would-be pop star father goes off to America in search of his big break, leaving her with Uncle Basil and Aunt Vi. Years later, Gita's dad still hasn't kept his promise to send for her to join him--in fact, he's disappeared without a trace. Meanwhile, back in England, Aunt Vi addresses her unfortunate niece as "Gita Jones, you useless lump!" and keeps threatening to throw Gita's beloved guitar in the dustbin. Uncle Basil is no better--he pockets all the money Gita earns by playing guitar professionally and eventually abandons her without a penny to her name.

A similar fate befalls Tina Layne, a sweet young singer forced to assume the punk persona of **"Tina the Terrible" [TRACY #88,** Jan. 17, 1981**]** by her mother's scheming half-sister, Janice Kent, and her husband, Frank, after her parents are killed and her younger brother crippled in an accident. Janice and Frank tell Tina that her earnings as Tina the Terrible are financing her brother Tommy's expensive treatments at a Swiss clinic. In reality, the money is going straight into

Janice and Frank's Swiss bank account, while Tommy vegetates in a seedy south coast boarding house. When Tina gets suspicious and hires a private detective to check up on Tommy's whereabouts, her aunt and uncle leak the truth about the boarding house to the press, then prepare to join their bank account in Switzerland, leaving Tina the Terrible to take the rap for their shabby treatment of her brother. Fortunatley, the private detective, whom Janice and Frank had bribed into cooperating with their swindle, turns state's evidence and tells all when they try to doublecross him, enabling

the police to catch the Kents and recover the money. At the fadeout, Tommy is well on the way to being cured, and his sister has become a bigger singing star than ever, despite an abrupt shift in style from "Tina the Terrible" to the wholesome Osmond-ish hostess of a TV show called **"Tune In With Tina."**

Another exploited half-orphan with an absentee father is Grace, the title character of **"The World of Grace" (BUNTY #1183, 1201,** Sept. 1980 and Jan. 1981**)**, an acrobatic little girl who goes around bragging about her dad, a famous trapeze star whom nobody has ever heard of. Famous or not, Grace's father hasn't so much as come see her for years, and lately he hasn't even troubled to send money for her upkeep to the disreputable gypsy family she lives with. This unwelcome development prompts Grace's surly gypsy "aunt" to send the girl out on the streets to sell clothespins, war-

ning her, "You'd better sell all these--or you needn't bother to return here at all!" When a sinister woman with a Russian accent appears and offers her "aunt" money in exchange for custody of Grace, the gypsy woman accepts the bribe with no questions asked, calmly commenting, "The kid's not mine, so I'm glad to be rid of her." Luckily for Grace, the mystery woman turns out not to be a Soviet spy [as one of my editors suspected], but a tyrannical gymnastics coach out to recruit potential world champions to train by hook or crook.

Improbably enough, sports coach Svengalis of this kind are familiar stock figures in the British girls' weeklies. The Jan. 17, 1981 installment of **"Bella,"** a **TAMMY AND MISTY** strip about a young Cockney gymnast, also involves a woman coach with a foreign accent and an unnerving manner.**"Dina's Desperate Days" (DEBBIE #397,** Sept. 20, 1980**)**. features yet another tyrannical trainer,who in this case makes up for her startling lack of a foreign accent or Slavic surname by displaying all the compassion and charm of a sea-going Simon Legree. As the maritime adjective implies, this strip is about swimming--or, more specifically, about a young swimmer named Dina Taylor who is unfortunate enough to catch the eye of Mary Driver, an insanely ambitious swimming coach with Olympic aspirations. This spells disaster for Dina, since the unscrupulous Mrs. Driver has somehow got hold of a photograph that seems to implicate Dina's father in a bank robbery.

Although the narration is full of heavy foreshadowing implying his innocence, Mr. Taylor is incapable of clearing himself if applied to because of a convenient accident which has left him paralyzed and speechless. Should he be accused and carted off to prison, Dina's mother, who has also been hospitalized after the same accident, would undoubtably die of a heart attack [clear evidence that she is a long-lost English cousin of Aunt May]. The despicable Mary Driver sets out to exploit this mind-bogglingly bathetic situation to the utmost, blackmailing Dina into spending Christmas Day practicing the side-stroke in an "icy salt-water open-air pool," while Driver herself stands on the sidelines shouting through a megaphone that Dina is too soft.

It is obvious to the most casual observer that with a regimen like this, Dina is more likely to achieve double pneumonia than a gold medal. But then, like most of the more notably sports-obsessed people in these surprisingly sports-mad girls' comics, Mary Driver is more than a little deranged by American standards.

In fact, one of the characteristic features of British girls' weeklies which is most startling to an American reader is their pronounced emphasis on the all-importance of being Good at Games, even if you happen to be a girl [an accident of birth which in most quarters of the United States has traditionally been considerd as constituting a more or less automatic exemption from any form of extracurricular physical activity more sports oriented than cheerleading]. If these comics reflect anything resembling every-day reality, just the opposite is true in Britain. Apparently, British girls who are not good at sports, or, worse yet, simply not interested in such hearty, wholesome forms of good, clean fun, are regarded as poor-spirited party-poopers whose aversion to athletics is an obvious outward sign of questionable character and lack of moral fiber. As in the old American boys' books like **Frank Merriwell at Yale** that made such a lasting impression on the males of earlier generations, from my father to Clarence Day [author of **LIFE WITH FATHER**] to President Reagan [according to a recent issue of the **NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW**] when they were growing up early in this cen-

tury, the characters' proficiency at and interest in sports is used as a handy shorthand method of distinguishing the good guys from the bad and the upstanding intended role models from the wimps and other undesirables. To someone who has read even a few of these sports-mad girls' comics, a significant phrase like "Billie Brewster, a keen athlete" [**"Billie at Paradise House," MANDY #730,** Jan. 10, 1981] is all the description needed to identify the character in question as one of the guys in the white hats, not to mention a goody two-shoes of the first water. Conversely, characters who attempt to bully or otherwise thwart the healthy-as-a-horse heroine are generally portrayed as lazy good-for nothings who cause their gym teachers to complain, "It's as much as I can do to get them to stand up, let alone do gymnastcs!" **("Graceful Gloria," DEBBIE #415,** Jan. 24, 1981**)** and/or spurn sports and those who enjoy them in favor of such advanced forms of dissipation as all-night parties with leather-jacketed louts who speak coarsely and carry concealed switchblades **("Billie at Paradise House";**

same issue as above**)**.

Even adult villains, who might legitimately be expected to be above such things, are sometimes presented as literal spoilsports. The most undisputably off-the-wall example of this is undoubtedly **"Butterfly Belle"**'s Dame Agatha, an aristocratic autocrat in a wheelchair who, for some obscure reason which is never so much as mentioned in the three installments of the strip that I have seen **(JUDY #1095-1097)**, has forbidden anyone living on the island she owns to go swimming. This creates endless difficulties for Belle, a local swimming champion whose chances of qualifying to "swim for Britain" in various international meets are jeopardized when she moves in with her grandfather, who is one of Dame Agatha's tenants.

Another adult enemy of sport is Aunt Edith in **"Lisa the Lonely Ballerina" (DEBBIE #397, 410, 413, 415,** Sept. '80 and Jan. '81**)**, who is at least supplied with something remotely resembling a rational motivation for her attempts to frustrate her neice's desire to study ballet--apparently, if Lisa fails to become a ballerina like her famous [dead] mother, Aunt Edith will inherit all the mother's money.[Although ballet is technically not a sport, its athletic elements seem to be just as important as its more obvious romantic mystique to some of the girls in these stories, who appear to regard ballet as virtually interchangeable with the second most popular obsession showcased in British girls' weeklies--gymnastics. In fact, in one story, **"Graceful Gloria."** the title character, forced to leave ballet school through no fault of her own, simply decides that if she can't be a ballerina, she'll become the British Ogla Korbut, and switches from the barre to the balance beam almost overnight.]

As might be expected from the British weeklies' prevailing exaltation of sports, there are a number of strips that center around the continuing struggle to transform a girl who considers herself essentially a non-athlete into some kind of playing-field paragon. Sometimes this "ugly duckling with a hockey stick" motif is handled humorously, as in **"Life's a Ball for Nadine"** [Dec. 6, 1980 and Jan. 17, 1981 **JINTY AND PENNY**]. This strip revolves around the efforts of Sally Simms and Sue Smith, two properly sports-minded members of the "B" netball team at Grey Street School, to induce their new classmate Nadine Nash, "a natural star at the game [who] could do wonders for the team," to play an occaisional game of netball instead of spending every waking hour when she's not actually in class at discos [which the author of the story appears to believe open at three inthe afternoon and routinely admit thirteen-year-olds]. Not so coincidentally, the Happy-go-lucky, disco-loving ace athlete Nadine happens to be the school's token black. Obviously the girl has a natural rhythm.

In one **"Nadine"**story [Jan. 17, 1981], the other girls accompany the dance crazy netball genius to a disco, only to get an unexpected chance to practice their jumping and catching skills in an attempt to intercept rotten fruit thrown at the stage by a schoolmate's unsportsmanlike rock-and-roll fanatic brother, who wants to

ensure that their favorite group will win a talent contest by driving all the competition away. In another [Dec. 6, 1980], pieces of a goalpost demolished in a schoolyard accident wind up serving as improvised roller skates for the ingenious Nadine, who lacks the more standard equipment usually required to enter a roller disco.

An even sillier strip is **"Rosie Lee"** [Sept. 13, 1980 **TAMMY AND MISTY**], which features a truly distictive [not to mention mind-boggling] gimmick: an ordinary cup of tea has much the same effect on the schoolgirl heroine as spinach has on Popeye. Rosie Lee, the daughter of the couple who runs a humble mobile canteen, but [have] won enough money in a competition to send [Rosie] to the plush Lady Strain School for girls,"is so addicted to tea that she even dreams about fields of the stuff. [This behavior is unremarkable enough to be almost ordinary at Lady Strain, where the officially-designated class snobs have elaborate dreams about more elitist items of geography labeled "Miss Olivia's Oil Field" and "Miss Davinia's Diamond Field." The "normal" girls, Tracy and Janice, dream of horseback riding.]

Though she complains of feeling"titchy" at the beginning of an important track meet with a rival school, St. Roman's, the mere sight of a cup of tea being waved by a teammate on the other side of the hurdle inspires Rosie to prodigious feats of high jumping, broad jumping, and every other kind of jumping, prompting the jealous rival team to mutter, "That little Lady Strain girl is too good. How does she do it?" When sneaky Olivia and Davinia spitefully reveal the secret to to the opposing team, the St. Roman's girls take advantage of the first break in the competition to lure Lady Strain's star athlete to a deserted room with the promise of more tea, then lock her in to get her out of the way until the rest of the track and field events are over. [It doesn't seem to occur to anyone that a much easier way to accomplish the same object would be to simply ask the gym teacher to check up on what was in that tea. Personally, I'm betting on amphetamines.]

Much more common than these light-hearted looks at athletic competition are strips where it is clearly taken for granted that being Good at Games is the be-all and end-all of existence. Even **"Wendy the Winner"** [**MANDY #730,** Jan. 10, 1981], is an essentially humorous serial about a girl who "lazily ignores" her family's time-honored tradition of beating all comers at sports until the ghost of her great-grandfather shows up to give her a literal shove in the right direction at strategic moments, obviously assumes that the readers ought to regard Wendy's dereliction of duty with the seme deranged degree of disapproval as her over-active ancestor does.

Other strips descend to the most bathetic depths of soap opera over such burning issues as a thirteen-year-old horsewoman's determination that **"Warrior Must Win!"** [**Mandy #730,** Jan. 10, 1981]. Warrior is the prize stallion Sally and Sarah Edwards' father, " a famous three day event rider," was training when he was paralyzed in a [choke] car crash.[If the highway mortality rate for parents of girls' weeklies heroines is any indication, the driving conditions on a typical British road

must resemble those usually found at a demolition derby.] Sarah is the sister who is expected to take over Warrior's training after the crash, but [she] soon loses enthusiasm, and it is Sally who ends up riding for a place in the European Championship team, disguised as Sarah." This causes many anxious moments for Sally, whose "disguise" requires her to ride and jump virtually blind, since she is extremely nearsighted, but must leave off her glasses in order to pass for outgoing, irresponsible Sarah, who somehow has perfect vision [or never - mentioned contact lenses] despite the fact that she and Sally are identical twins.

"Warrior Must Win" is pathetic above and beyond the line of duty in every sense of the word, but there can be no doubt that the prize for Most Ludicrous Tear-Jerking Situation Involving Athletic Competition belongs to a strip significantly entitled **"Belinda Bookworm"** [Jan. 17, 1981 **TAMMY AND MISTY**]. The top-of-the-page headline warns, "Starts today:The story of a sports outcast." The opening caption states, "Belinda Binder has always been one of the most studious girls at

school, and every night she could be found reading in her bedroom. However, nobody knew that deep inside, Belinda carried a secret ambition to do something very different...." Sure enough, the first panel shows Belinda sitting discontentedly in her book-lined bedroom [complete with a poster of Shakespeare and a bust of Beethoven], thinking, "Another evening gone, and I've finished another book! Yet why do I feel so fed-up, just sitting here using my head?" As if in answer, Janet and Dawn, "the two sportiest girls in [Belinda's] class," jog by outside, shouting tauntingly through the window, "Bookworm! Belinda Bookworm!" "There she is-- nose between the pages as usual! The little bore!" one of the junior jockettes sneers in the following panel. Then she and her companion soar nonchalantly over the trash bins and sprint off into the sunset, leaving envious Belinda to stare longingly after them, exclaiming, "Wow! What leaps! Both girls are great at sport.... unlike me!"

The next panel shows in its full horror the unfortunate environment that has made poor Belinda the well-read wallflower she is today. Seated at the kitchen table with the financial pages of the newspaper propped open in front of him and a thick book beside his plate, Belinda's bespectacled father warns, "Don't forget your textbooks, Belinda!" "Quite, dear!" her equally-bespectacled mother adds. "I never forget to take mine!" [Needless to say, Belinda herself sports rather stylish horn-rims.] "With dad an accountant and Mum a town-hall clerk, it's no wonder I've been brought up as a bookworm!" their dutiful daughter thinks tragically.

Arriving at school, Belinda is promptly embarrassed by her teacher, who loudly praises the "bookworm's" neat homework, then pointedly compares it to the sloppy assignments handed in by the "sporty" Dawn and Janet. Nothing daunted, the two athletes utter insincere apologies, then giggle over how "it's a different story with sport."

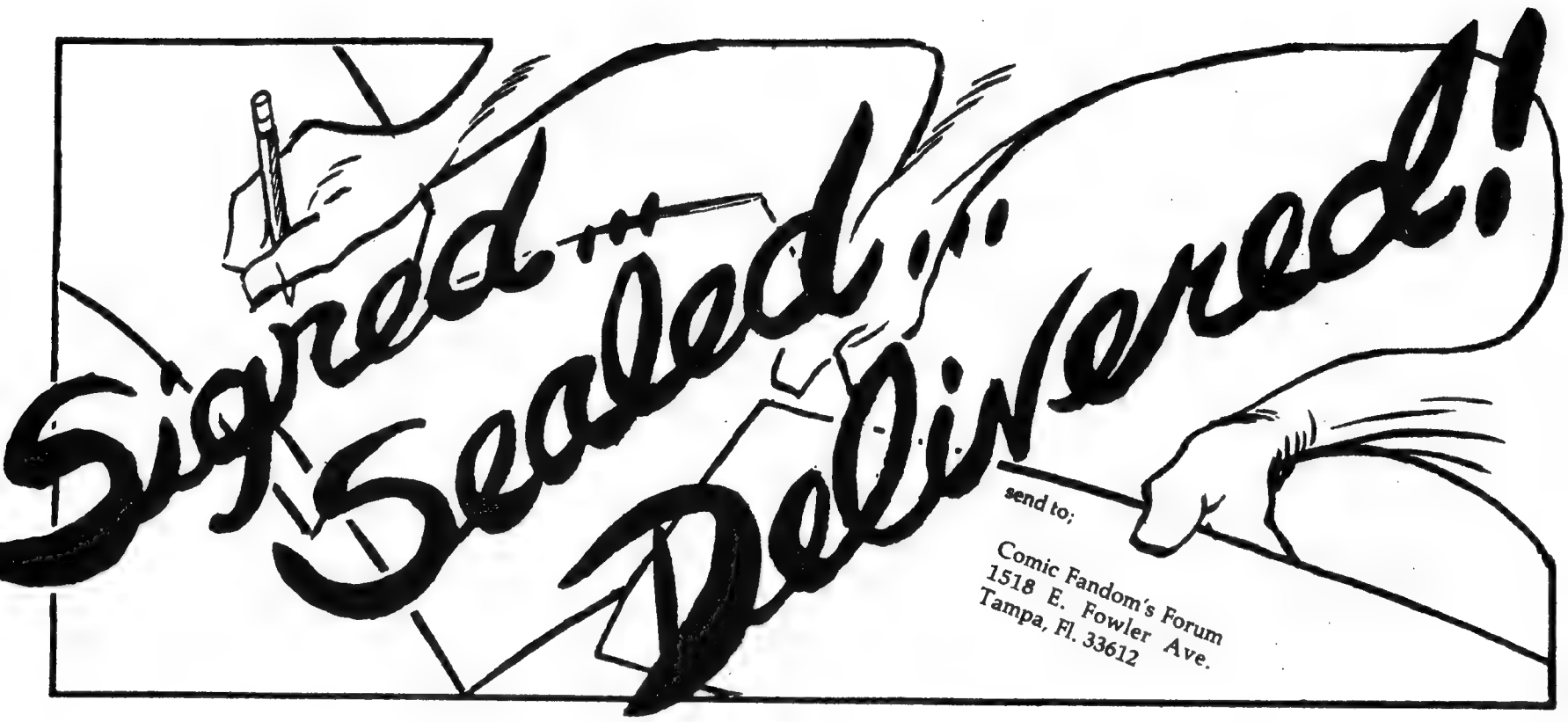
Later, in gym class, Belinda is left without a partner when the girls are told to practice gymnastics in pairs. As if this weren't enough, Janet [or Dawn] surrepetitiously trips her, prompting the brusque gym teacher [who has noticed the fall, but not its cause] to scold, "Really, Belinda Binder--always sprawling all over the place!" At this moment, Miss Milton, the english teacher appears, asking if Belinda can be excused from gym to help set up books in the library. Left alone with the books, Belinda gazes wistfully out the window, thinking, "I've certainly been put in my place! But down there, through those skylights--that's the gym, where the rest of the class are!"

When Belinda finally tears herself away from these masochistic musings long enough to mount a stepladder with an armload of books, the ladder collapses under her, knocking the empty bookcase off balance. Tumbling through the air as the furniture collapses around her, Belinda thinks desperately, "I'll come a cropper, unless....unless I land properly in a forward roll!" To her own astonishment, Belinda executes this tricky gymnastic maneuver successfully and lands safely."I did it! I'm down in one piece! I did a perfect roll and nobody was around to see!" the dazed girl bookworm thinks, straightening her horn-rimmed glasses. "Now maybe I can try something next time in gym down there!"

But this is not to be. At the end of the class period, Miss Milton returns with the shattering news that, "I've been talking with Miss Jagger [the gym teacher] about allowing you to help as librarian during all sports periods! We think you'd be wasting your time alongside Janet and Dawn! You belong here in the library, among the books! See you tommorrow, Belinda!" "Yes, miss!" Belinda quavers in close-up, tears falling from her eyes.

Miss Milton leaves the room, but Belinda stays behind, thinking defiantly, "Belong here in the library--no, not any more! In here, I just did something athletic--like those girls in the gym! And I want to try it again!" In the final panel of the story, Belinda resolves on a difficult course of action in a scene presented in the same melodramatic, high-sounding terms as Spider-Man's epoch making realization that "with great power comes great responsibility." Standing in the middle of the deserted library, Belinda states, "I could secretly train here...train on the shelves, seats and tables--just like it was my own private gym!" Then she makes a fateful vow: I don't want to be a bookworm anymore-I want to be a champion at sport!"

I think I want to throw up. But I'll be here next issue with yet another installment of English insanity, temptingly entitled, **"The Boarding School Mystique."**



When I read the following letter, I was reminded of what I was told by a professor during my old school days. I do not recall the exact wording, but it went something like - The competent writer develops the ability to completely and concisely express his thoughts with a judicious use of wordage. He develops style and poise without the need to dress up his work with extra words for the sake of bulk.

She would have loved Denny O'Neil!

Dear Editor:

Paul Balze is on the List.

Denny O'Neil

First, let me say that it is not the policy of the magazine (or NMP for that matter) to print something for the sake of muckraking. We believe that criticisms should be constructive and supported with facts and examples. It should be provocative and should never be abrasive or snide. When criticism drifts into these latter mentioned areas, it develops a negativism that defeats its usefulness. Mr. Balze never intended for his articles to give this impression, and if the readers continue to follow his series, they will discover that he really likes Green Lantern and the work of Denny O'Neil.

Perhaps, one of the problems that we have encountered here has to do with expectation. This is a problem that produces both good and bad; not only in comics, but in fandom as well. When we look back at some of the work of Denny O'Neil on GL/GA and BATMAN, we see some of the best writing to grace the pages of a graphic story. He set a standard of quality that made those issues, at the least, near classics.

So, what happens? We expect all his work to measure up to that standard. Within reason, that is not so bad an expectation. Mr. O'Neil is capable of producing stories that are well constructed; with strong plots and good character insights, issue after issue, year after year. But should we expect him to continuously go beyond all the elements that make a good story to produce that which, for one reason or another, has such an emotional impact on us, that we deem it to be classic - because he produced that level of work before. And expect him to do this issue after issue, year after year. At this point, we are asking him to do something no living being could possibly do. We are not being fair to Mr. O'Neil or any other writer in comics. Let's leave that sort of fuzzy-thinking expectations to other magazines.

A final note. We agree with the axiom that if a person is unable to do the job, he will not hold it for long. Denny O'Neil has been writing successfully now for quite some years - that should say it all.

Dear **LOC** folks,

I hate to discourage experimentation, but really, I liked LOC just about the way it was. I just have no interest in fandom showcases; I don't even have enough time to read all the professional material I want to read. Critical writing is what interests me, and **LOC's** devotion to critical opinion above all else is why I have thoroughly enjoyed the book so far. When it was decided to vary the book a bit by including "Spanky" and "Captain Heroic," I shrugged – I didn't care for these features, but I accepted them as necessary to help sales. With the exception of those few pages, LOC was still solid criticism from front to back. Now, however....

Your new Fandom Spotlight is interesting, but other books do interviews – why become more like them? As for the showcases, they're nice in their way, but really, I would much rather have read the Vaughn Bode retrospective originally promised for this issue. Even the overview of Captain Action. Commentary is what I buy LOC for, and you may lose me if you continue this emphasis on showcasing fan talent – it just doesn't interest me.

Further, I find your method of starting a Fandom Forum ever so vaguely degrading. Really, do we have to argue through for "fun" the old, tired propositions about DC vs. Marvel, who is stronger than Superman, and so on? The very existence of LOC in the first place would suggest that fandom has grown beyond such trivial squabbles. There's no need to set up straw man propositions for fans to debate; any worthwhile article will generate its own, natural responses, as witnessed by the articles of Murray Ward, Carol Strickland, and Margaret O'Connell.

As I've said, I dislike running things down just as you're really getting them going, but I honestly feel that your battery of innovations is eroding what was so unique about LOC.

Thank you for your consideration, and good luck as LOC wends onward.

Brian Nelson

We hate to disappoint any of our readers, but we really think that you are somewhat hasty with your decision on LOC - now Comic Fandoms Forum. You seem to make the assumption that we are no longer running critical material. Well, a look at the contents of the issues since we have begun this change seem to indicate otherwise. We even have an excellent article in number seven on the heroines of Chris Claremont, written by one Brian Nelson. The type of material in that article is exactly what we feel will always help to make this magazine stand out from every other one on the stands and that type of material will always find a happy home here. However, by expanding the page count, we can run other types of material as well; material that is worth reading and does not really find a home anywhere else. Take a look at the other fanzines and then tell me how many interviews you see with the creators and/or publishers of alternative publications. When was the last time any of them interviewed Mike Gold, Steve Schanes, or Mike Baron? This type of coverage of comics also deserves a home as does a publication which can present the work of ambitious fans - whether in writing, artwork, or continuity strips. We do not feel that we have to make a decision whether to run one type of material or the other. Honestly believing that many readers are interested in a variety of work, we will continue on our course until convinced otherwise. And so far the dramatic increase in sales would seem to bear us out. I hope that you will stick with us as both a reader and a contributor and hold off on making a decision on the magazine until you give the new format a fair chance to prove itself. OK?

Fellow Fans:

To date, I have issues 1 - 3 of your excellent new fanzine. Let me say that I find the articles quite good, often excellent, and I heartily support your concept for an independent forum for fandom.

In the spirit of debate, I'd like to make some comments concerning Carol Strickland's article in LOC no. 1, "The Rape of Ms. Marvel", especially in reply to Ronny Richardson's letter in LOC no. 3. Unfortunately, I must count myself as one of many fans who was profoundly disturbed by **Avengers 200**, yet failed to make my discontent known to the parties concerned. It took Ms. Strickland's article for me to truly understand why the issue disturbed me so. Mr. Richardson, I'm afraid, missed the point of Ms. Stricland's complaint.

The facts of the issue as I understand them is this: as depicted in **Avengers 200**, Marcus, desiring a means of escaping limbo, transported Ms. Marvel from a quinjet to him, used his machines to induce her to love him, implanted his essence in her in a manner simulating pregnancy, and transported her back to Earth without any awareness of what has happened to her of her condition. Thus, Carol Daverns found herself pregnant without apparent cause or reason. When Marcus's plan failed, Carol returned to Limbo with him, motivated by feelings of love towards him; even though these feelings were artificially induced without her consent. The Avengers, in turn, not only failed to question his actions but even aided Marcus's return to Limbo with Carol, apparently with their approval. Unless one considers mind control healthy for the individual, particularly female, one cannot consider Ms. Marvel's fate as "a role model worthy to be looked up to by all women".

The true horror of the story can be emphasized by a comparison with a similar one, particularly the "Clash of the Titans", two-parter in **Teen Titans**. Wonder Girl finds herself, against her will, compelled to fall in love with the Greek Titan, Hyperion. She realizes her feeling has no cause or reason, yet she is compelled to fall in love with the Greek Titan and follow her feelings.

Hyppolity and the Titans [Teen], however, instead of quietly surrendering her to Hyperion, fight for her release. They realized that a love compelled is not true

love at all, and it would be far worse for them to abandon Wonder Girl then, when she needed them the most.

To force another to sexually serve oneself whether by violence or compulsion is rape, and to condone such an action is doubly unjust, for it approves of evil while at the same time condems the victim by emphasizing that she will get no help nor even justice. Let us hope that such a story does not appear again, or if it does, that fandom totally and resoundly denounce it for the perverted trash it is! As in the famous quote, "All it takes for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.".

Wayne Oscar Williams

Your letter is exactly the type of response that this magazine was created to illicit. The interest and enthusiasm in your topic which you demonstrate are exciting. It is very exciting to know that we can run material which causes this degree of interest. While I feel that the previous editors of this magazine have pretty much exhausted any comment that we could make here and that they have said it better than we could possibly hope to, I do feel that I should tell you to stay tuned for future comments designed to make your blood boil. No - seriously - we do have some very interesting and even controversial material scheduled for publication. Stay tuned.

Character© 1982 DC Comics

Dear Robert, Hal, and nmp gang:

First objective: I must extend thanks to you for printing my letter in issue no. 6 of **LOC**. I had gotten nos. 5 and 6 at the time, and by a strange coincidence, travelled to Pittsburgh that same week. I showed the letter to that "friend" I mentioned, and he got a kick out of it [and almost kicked me, for that matter]. Also, nice Thor illo. Luckily, Thor has vowed never to strike any human directly with ol' Uru ...

Second objective: **LOC** no. 5. I'm going to the back of the book here. I've been pronouncing the title of the magazine "El-Oh-Cee", taking each letter separately. Sounds good to me, anyway. Marvel has changed its direct sales number/date box, as of all comics dated October 1982. The issue number is larger, but the U.K. price has been reduced because they added Canada into the price listing as well. The Spidey head in the UPC box is still an eyesore, I agree; why doesn't Marvel just eliminate it from the direct sales comics also on the mainstream market? Then again, collectors would argue over which is more valuable. You can't win.

Part II of Mark Evanier's "What It Was Was Fandom", completes a nice essay. Since I've already raved about it so in my last letter, I'll just say, "good job, Mark". I'm not talking to the dealers, either.

I thought Don & Maggie Thompson could have had a better article if they discussed some more inept villains to support their theory. Some study subjects could be: The Red Ghost and his Stupor, er, Super Apes, Ramrod, Professor Power, The Cyclone, and Water Wizard to name a few.

I enjoyed "Who Is My Neighbor?" and "Pacifism in Comics" greatly, but Paul Balze's "All Flesh Is Glass" bothered me some. This, along with no. 6's "Reflections in an Emerald Eye" detail the histories of the Spectre and Green Lantern, respectively. That's what bothers me. I don't really want to see hero histories in **LOC**, they belong in **Amazing Heroes** instead. Some of Paul's snide comments bugged me somewhat. I would like to see Paul examine his series rather than detail events in chronological order. Did the stories succeed? What were the character developments? How was the story received by readers? These and other questions of this nature are what I'd like Paul to probe into.

On a separate page, I enclose my answer to Margaret O'Connell's "Why [Some] Women Won't Touch Comics". I will not comment on her writings yet; I see a pattern emerging and I want to see how it evolves.

"Katholocity" - keep this as a regular feature! Ms. Glancy has a spark in writing **LOC** needs after the tone of most serious articles. The strips this time out improved, Spanky in particular.

Third objective: **LOC** no. 6. New policy, new outlook. Deduction: great idea! I would like to contribute articles other than these long, drawn out letters, and will soon. Currently I have promised "Sherlock Holmes in Comics" to a Holmes scion publication I am somewhat involved in, and if they don't mind, I will submit it to you folks too. Murray Ward piqued my interest in "More Last Stories", so I'm thinking up ways to end some heroes' lives. It's more fun than you think!

Mike Baron's interview shows me that some so called fans are more professional than not. He has very definite ideas on Nexus, and the way it is developing, I hope it continues.

The Art Showcase and Captain Heroic were great! Spanky turned out OK, and the "King and I" article by Kurt Olsson was good. Now we need a look at "Future King", or Kirby's work on Destroyer Duck and Captain Victory outings.

Dwight Decker's "Playing Tag with the Eagles" started off a great fiction feature. His explanation of how people could fly may be applied to other flying superheroes now; the powers they received created a parasite that enables them to fly. Enough suspense was built up to keep me waiting for the next issue.

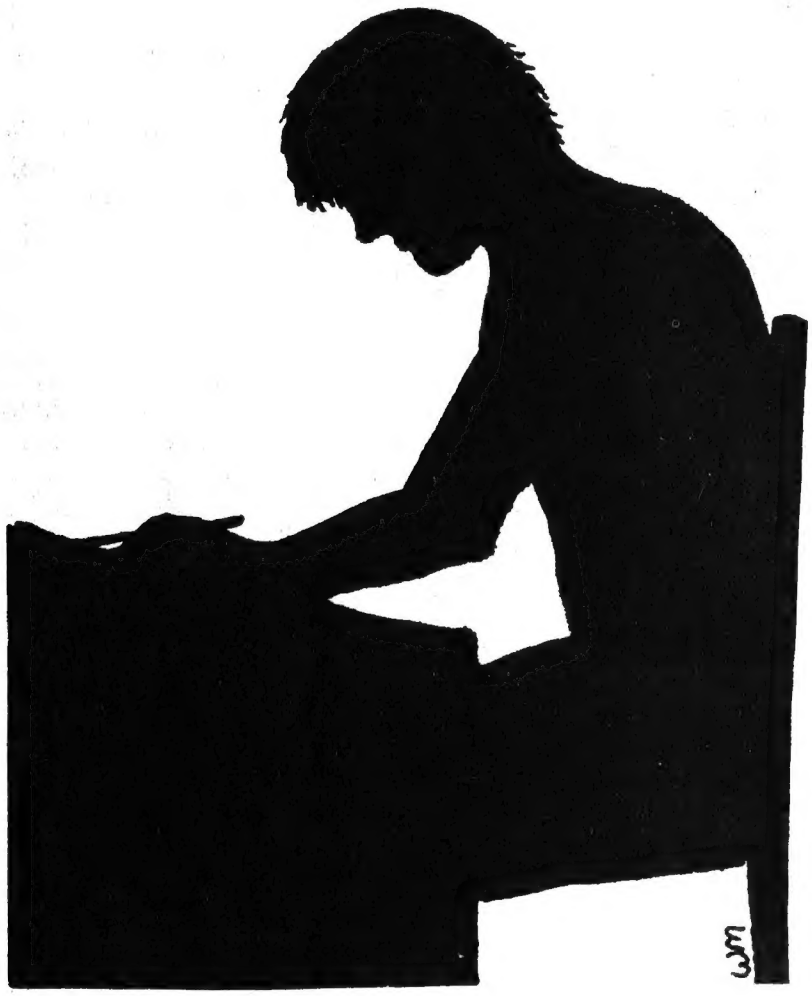
Fourth objective: Conclusion. **LOC** thrives and I love it! Hope to see more articles and though provoking discussions. So, until my next outing ...

Mike Mettler

This letter had a little of everything. A pat on the back for the things we did right and a few pointers on some areas that we might have been a little weak on. Your thoughts and suggestions will help us in plotting future issues, and we'll pass along your comments to the article writers who you mentioned. We appreciate your letter and look forward to hearing from you again - we are always looking for good articles; so by all means, contribute.

As for "how LOC is pronounced"; "LOC" or L-O-C? Well, I've often wondered about that myself. But the magazine has been changed from LOC to Comic Fandoms Forum, so I guess now I'll never know for sure. The important thing, though, is that the name may change but everything that you like about LOC will still be here.

We will continue to do our best to improve the magazine. We may not always succeed, but we promise to always try. And with responses and participation from readers like you, Mike, I'm sure we'll succeed more often than not.



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THE DC TIMELINE

AN EXAMINATION OF THE BANALITY OF EVIL IN THE X-MEN
By Margaret O'Connell

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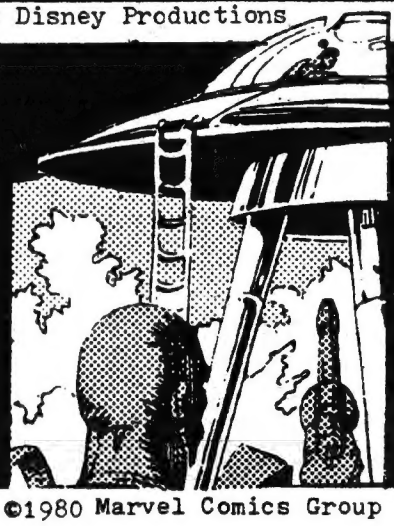

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DAREDEVIL MEETS THE LITTLE WISE GUYS-A complete reprinting of the 20 page feature story in which Daredevil first met these amazing kids.

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THE HEROES OF 2000 A.D.-A long piece on all of the 2000 A.D. series, illustrated with original art and cover reproductions. 2000 A.D. is the leading adventure comics magazine in England.

AN INTERVIEW WITH ARTHUR RANSON-One of England's leading comic book artists talks about comics.

BEM TALKS WITH PAT BOYETTE- Pat Boyette finally achieves the recognition he deserves, in England if not yet in his own country.

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COMIC FANDOM'S FORUM #10 EDITOR:Robert Lewis

AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD COMELY-This interview, postponed from the previous issue, takes a look at the work of one of the more interesting forces in the alternative publishing market. First he created the only newsstand comic book to be launched in the past five years and now he is back with a combination graphic magazine and political platform, Starriders and the Peace Machine.

HOWARD CHAYKIN TALKS ABOUT HOW TO DRAW-One of our most popular fantasy and comic book artist talks about how he draws and what tools he uses to tell a story.

GREEN LANTERN, PART THREE-This analysis, which has already drawn the attention of writer Denny O'Neil, continues to cover the recent run of Green Lantern comics.

THE MARVEL CHRONOLOGY-Chuck Huber begins his series on the exact birth date of every character in the Marvel Universe. No Marvel completist will want to be without this timeline and authoritative and lengthy piece which includes complete explanations of each date given.

The continuing adventures of Spanky, Space Cadet, Fandom Showcase, and Fandom Forum complete the issue.

COMICS FEATURE #21 EDITOR:Robert Lewis

FEATURE NEWS-All the latest plus a preview interview with Walt Simonson on his upcoming Marvel Graphic Novel, The Starslammers, and our exclusive People-In-The-News.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DON HECK-The artist who continues to bring the Justice League to new sales heights talks about his long and varied career. Heavily illustrated with examples of his work including samples of his new Roulette series, a new heroine co-created by Steve Englehart.

THE JLA INDEX PREVIEW-The first DC INDEX leads off with an in-depth article on the Justice League of America, what it is and why it came to be. Here we preview this article prior to the publication of the index.

ONCE MORE WITH FRELENG-Peter Sanderson talks about the works of one of our greatest animators.

THE GREENING OF AMERICA-Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams created one of the heights of modern comics on a brief run of Green Lantern/Green Arrow stories. Here Margaret O'Connell examines them.

TALKING WITH JAY DISBROW-One of the L.B. Cole stable of science fiction artists tells what it was like back then and why there is now a revival of interest in the work they were doing.

THE MARVEL TEAMS OF THE 70S-One of the more prolific periods for the super-team in comics was at Marvel in the last decade. Murray Ward examines the good, the bad, and the ugly.

PLUS the Fandom Zone, JIM KORKIS on animation, JOEL THINGVALL on the media, and RICK NORWOOD on comic strips.

A SPECTACULAR COVER BY DON HECK FEATURING A PREVIEW OF THE UPCOMING MEETING OF THE JLA AND THE AVENGERS.

COMICS FEATURE

The GOLDEN AGE of COMICS

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